

Design for All



Le Louvre Abu Dhabi by Jean Nouvel. © Photo credit Dr. Dolly Daou

"Everything in the universe is within you"-Rumi

20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design

Part II: Expressions

Guest Editor: Dr Dolly Daou

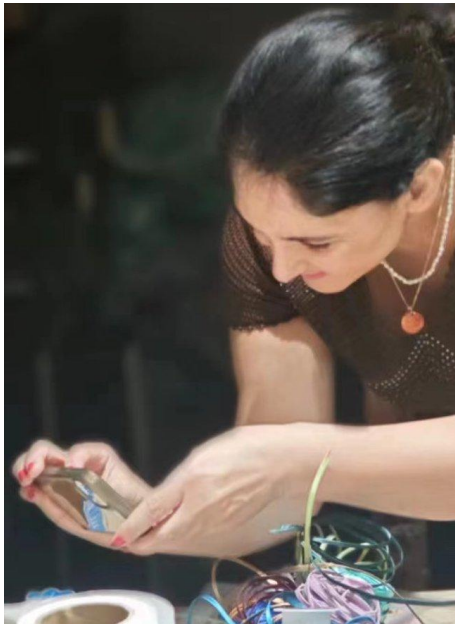
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Guest Editor:



Dr Dolly Daou

Member of Advisory Board for Cindrebay University's, Dubai. Co-founder and co-Chair of Food Think Tank, Cumulus Association. Kingston Citizen of the Year 2024, Australia

Dr Dolly Daou is on the advisory board of Cindrebay University in Dubai and since 2018, Dr Daou has been the co-founder and co-chair of Food Think Tank, Cumulus Association. In recognition for her career trajectory, Dr Daou achieved the Kingston Community Award of Citizen of the Year (2024) And was the finalist for Kingston Community Award, Women of Year (2024). Dr Daou was also awarded Al-Safeer Congress Ambassador Award from the Ministry of Economy and Tourism in Dubai.

Dr Daou completed a PhD in the reconstruction of cities and communities in the fields of architecture, interior architecture, urban design and anthropology. Dr Dolly Daou's academic experience in design education and research spans over 25 years,

of establishing higher education programs and leading non-for-profit organisations in Australia, Asia, Europe and in the Middle East. After establishing the Interior Architecture Program at Swinburne University of Technology, Dr Daou was invited to lead the Food Design Lab at l'École de design Nantes Atlantique in France. Dr Daou's global and multi-disciplinary experience, established the platform of her distinctive knowledge and expertise in higher education design programs and in non-for-profit organisations. Combining her Doctorate knowledge in interior architecture and urbanism with ecological management of food and natural resources, Dr Daou became one of the global food design experts with distinctive trans-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary skills and knowledge. Her expertise led her to develop and to transform theoretical research into impactful economical and ecological outcomes for higher education and for organisations.

Dr Daou collaborated with policy-makers to influence policies and to develop community projects. Also, Dr Daou established design entrepreneurship programs with a successful record of transforming ideas into business ventures. Dr Daou is author to many publications including: Unbounded on the Interior and Interiority (Cambridge scholars) and co-editor of Food Transformations: Adaptability, Connectivity and Identity (in-print by Routledge). <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5113-818X> Google Scholar: Dr Dolly Daou. Website: <https://dollydaou.org/>

Editor's Note:

20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design Part I and II: Receptivity and Expressions

Dr Dolly Daou

I am privileged to have been invited for the third time as a Guest Editor at Design For All for their February and March 2025 special issues, to celebrate their 20-year anniversary. I wish to thank Dr Sunil Bhatia for inviting me as the guest editor to celebrate a significant milestone in Design For All's history and for all the authors who accepted my invitation and are trusting me to share their voices and to celebrate their achievements.

For 20 years, uninterrupted Design For All, demonstrated its commitment to high of design and research by inviting: authors, thought leaders and academics as guest editors for their monthly publications. To celebrate its anniversary Design For All is dedicating its 2025 publications to honour women designers. The February and March 2025 special issues are linked together through their celebration of 20 women designers; each special issue will feature 10 authors. I have titled the February special issue: 20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design Part I: Receptivity, and for the March issue 20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design Part II: Expression. These titles represent the ratio of 20 year-anniversary of Design For All to 20 remarkable authors. The authors were invited from a global network with a verified knowledge of their track record in contributing to designing design; many I have collaborated and/or I am currently collaborating with. Although only 20 women designers are celebrated in these issues, there are thousands of other designers

from different genders that deserve to be recognised for their contribution to design. This opens an opportunity, for this project to continue to evolve into an archive of documenting the history of design through the celebration of people's trajectories and design contributions.

I have kept the same Editor's Note for both special issues to position and link the context, process and purpose of both publications in addition to explaining the background of Design For All. The process began by inviting authors from different disciplinary backgrounds to share their thoughts, stories and knowledge by writing 1000-2000 words on a topic of their choice. Through academic articles, essays, and reflective writing each author selected their topic based on their own reflections, disciplines, professional experiences and career trajectory. As the authors were designing their own lives and careers they were also designing and contributing to design.

The original intention of this special issue has been to position and recognise the achievements of the authors, by offering an open platform for authors to share their voices and trusting that their voices will be heard, respected, recognised and appreciated. During the editing process, as I abided by the scholarly standards of academic publications, I ensured minimum intrusion on the writing. I kept the authors' original voices, uninfluenced and in their original cultural, and linguistic context, meaning and purpose. The authors' voices expressed the urgency of the design state and of the issues facing design at the present moment, to be heard now globally and across sectors.

The outcome of this special issue evolved into two rich depositories of design knowledge from a diversity of design topics, disciplines,

language and cultures. The articles demonstrate the value of the universal language of design practice, education and research globally. The February and March special issues combined include articles written by twenty authors from seventeen different countries across five continents and different design and architectural disciplines, which demonstrates the receptivity of design and the diversity of the authors' expressions.

The value of these papers are in the topics and their reflections on the authors' career trajectories and their definition of design, as an open, adaptable, and a relevant discipline. In both issues, new disciplines, thought processes, storytelling advocacy, methods, methodologies, and perspectives are introduced to show the value of design in our lives and in education and practice across sectors.

The journal issues were designed sequentially to celebrate the different areas of design. The February issue is part I of the 20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design, and explores the different definitions and openness of design beyond a singular discipline, which reflects its receptivity and adaptability. The March Issue is Part II of the 20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design and explores design expressions, through storytelling advocacy, cultural contexts, sustainable and ecological design, inspirational career trajectories and questions on higher education internationalisation and funding.

The cover image shows a perspective through the glass at the Le Louvre in Abu Dhabi. I have used the same cover page as a visual link between Part I and Part II, to represent the visual identity of 20:20 Celebrating Women Designing Design. The image was selected due its representation of the two design themes of these special issues: receptivity and expression. Through this cultural

exchange, the architect Jean Nouvel, combined both the French and the Emirati's cultural context and identity, expressing the receptivity of both cultures and the historical significance of Le Louvre. Similarly, the 20 authors across continents unite through their receptivity, and through their expression of their design contribution, based on their different cultural and disciplinary perspectives and experiences. The text that appears on the glass, is the first part of Rumi's quote in English and in French, which adds another cultural and lingual dimension and meaning. The original quote is: 'Everything in the universe is within you'. This quote reflects the authors' creative achievements and contribution; their internal calling and purpose led them to being open and receptive in their careers for the possibilities of design receptibility and expressions.

It has been an inspirational experience working on these special issues with incredible women, and witnessing these two archives of design storytelling come together. I invite you to read, understand and respect the voices of the twenty influential authors, who continue to inspire, motivate and contribute to designing design, across disciplines and continents. As I celebrate with Design For All their 20-year anniversary, I also celebrate the achievements of the twenty women and every person who is designing their own life trajectory, while contributing to their local and global community. With the hope that this publication will evolve into an impactful project to narrate more successful stories and to celebrate the value of design.



***Professor Catherine Harper
Acting Provost and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, The
British University in Egypt***

Professor Catherine Harper is Acting Provost and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Academic Partnerships) at The British University in Egypt. She was previously Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the Universities of Chichester and the Creative Arts in the UK and has held senior academic leadership positions at the Universities of Portsmouth, East London and Brighton. She is Editor-in-Chief for the Taylor & Francis journal, TEXTILE: Cloth & Culture and a Non-Executive Director on the Board of the Institute for Educational & Social Equity. Professor of Textiles since 2011, she also holds the position of Chair Professor of Design at Woxsen University, India. Her textual research and visual practice spans textiles, material culture and autoethnographic practice and references (Northern) Irish women's rights to bodily autonomy and reproductive choice; ecology, archaeology and mythology in Ireland, social justice and cultural history, shame and sexuality, melancholy and mourning, abjection and death. She is a proud member of the Northern Irish feminist diaspora.

Personal Design, Political Design, Dark Design

Professor Catherine Harper

Abstract

The western-feminist slogan 'the personal is political' (Hanisch, 1970) emerged in the late 1960s, connecting women's varied experiences of, for example, reproductive autonomy, pay inequality, childcare/household labour, and domestic violence, with social and political issues. These include social justice, civil rights, abortion access, gay and women's liberation, the dismantling of systemic racism and structural oppression.

As an Irish, feminist, auto-ethnographic artist-designer-writer-academic, my lived experience of three decades of political violence and social repression in Northern Ireland (1967-98) and the different but no less complex cultures of the UK (1996-2022) and Egypt (1922-), is informed by deliberately, intentionally designed activism for freedom, autonomy and equality. Of the several meanings of design (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), I am drawn to the verbs devise, contrive, plot, scheme, calculate, and the adverbs deliberately, purposefully and intentionally, as they allow for cunning narrative and crafty advocacy.

Keywords: *Feminist, political, social justice, civil rights, liberation, auto-ethnography, cunning, crafty, narrative, advocacy*

The western-feminist slogan 'the personal is political' (Hanisch, 1970) emerged in the late 1960s, and entered my consciousness in 1980s Belfast when I formed a nascent philosophical framework that remains current. Using the cunning lingua of creative text and crafty textiles, I narrate the impact of Ireland's bloody and stained social-cultural transformation in the final decades of the last century on women of my generation. Design is not about drawing, planning or arranging for me. It's much darker.

Born in an Irish border town, with Catholic-Presbyterian parentage, I studied textile design in Belfast with women who were "caught out" or "got":

Jeans gaping at the zip, she returned from her family with two black eyes, and dropped out.

Slim, gaunt, haunted by her "year out" in Dublin, she mourned for the only child she would ever have.

She was wilder, went to London, never came back.

She stood at barred convent gates weekly to see her boy.

She "gave up" two children, both conceived in rape, the first just after she started menstruating.

Her wee baby went to the Bethany Home, and then on to somewhere in the world.

I held my tongue, held my breath for my period, held myself. In my first winter in Belfast, a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl called Ann Lovett – three years my junior – gave birth alone to a baby boy on the frozen ground beside a Virgin Mary grotto in the Irish midlands (O'Reilly, 1984). The familiar story broke to the usual national consternation, but – unexpectedly – thousands of dark stories of Ireland's long-standing culture of secrecy and shame around rape, infanticide, teenage pregnancy, unmarried motherhood, secret burials and suicide broke with it, testimonies of cruelties to women,

mothers and children in an Ireland purporting to love the family.

In the mid-1980s, having digested the gothic horror of Ann Lovett bleeding to death on the snow beside her dead newborn infant, and the infamous Kerry Babies scandal of adultery, double infanticide, and – unbelievably – a woman accused by the police of her ‘illegitimate’ twins’ conception by two different fathers (McCaffery, 1985), Irish women reeled with the revelation of Ireland’s female genital mutilation, the birth barbarism of contemporary symphysiotomy (Dunphy, 2021). This was the nightmarish non-consensual slicing or sawing through pubic cartilage, ligaments and pelvic bone, and splitting apart of a woman’s pelvis to enable her, screaming and restrained, to give birth vaginally, and – pelvis strapped up again – carry unlimited subsequent pregnancies through prolapse, incontinence, agony and trauma (O’Carroll, 2014).

Out of the shadows emerged the extensive and systemic sexual, emotional and physical abuse of thousands of children by clergy, in Catholic and Protestant industrial schools, orphanages, Magdalene laundries and Bethany Homes (Cooper, 2013). Labouring, loveless and unpaid, existence unspoken, location unknown, burial unmarked, washing immovable stains from ecclesiastical, governmental, civic and commercial cloths, girls and women engaged in repetitive rituals of laundering, stitching and ironing linking their maternity with mourning until the last laundry closed in 1996 (Fischer, 2016).

The endurance of suffering, trauma and vulnerability, frail and isolated victims, illegitimate, disfigured or unbaptised Irish babies denied burial on consecrated ground, and those who looked away. Seven hundred and ninety-six infants and young children, bundled

in greying cloth, found in a Tuam convent's Mother and Baby Home sewage system (McNamara, 2014). So worthless and uncared for, interred without ceremony, dignity or baptism – shrouded in an unholy and abject place for the disposal of Ireland's waste, hidden in plain sight (Corless, 2012).

Stained memories of desire or grief marked cloth or skin, imprinting smell, sweat, sorrow and death. The leakage of persistent sores and raw wounds on the unhealed flesh of the national body, swaddled, shrouded, stifled and sheltered by cloth, lingered as indexes of moments of existence and proof of happenings, memories and evidence of the corporeal, and – like prolonged death throes or the never-ending-ness of a death-rattle – resisting the Irish body's erasure.

Irish 'blood sacrifice' played out in the offering up of menstrual detritus by incarcerated republican women, turning degradation into resistance to penal control, hygiene and political dominance, and in the hypnotic abjection of the 1980s Maze Prison blanket protest turned hunger strike (McAuliffe, 2010). I was sixteen when the first republican hunger striker, 27-year-old Bobby Sands died on 5 May 1981. My generation was self-protectively inured to what was termed 'an acceptable level of violence' (Maudling, 1971), but Kevin Lynch was local and Kieran Doherty was the name of a classmate, so it felt near and real.

Their blankets were destroyed as materially degraded, politically incendiary objects. Murder, street violence and rioting across Northern Ireland, black flags on homes sympathetic to the hunger strikes and as intimidation devices to those known not to be, intensified around hunger striker funerals, with their paramilitary colour parties, volleys of shots and political speeches. The

'television images of emaciated Christ-like figures with longer hair and beard confined to hospital beds' (Savage, 2017), the youth of those dying in their rough prison-blanket shrouds, as with men going to war, was perversely sexy. They appeared 'feminised' rather than emasculated, devotional, performing a yielding and violated martyrdom, a romantically noble self-sacrifice.

My grandmother washed, dressed and laid out the dead of her neighbours in rural County Derry. At wakes, watching over the dead, she would drink tea, enjoy the *craic*¹, and exchange stories of the 'black arts'. Stories that made up the warp and weft of the tightly woven social fabric and passed on to me: the ragged and hooded banshee, the man with 'second sight', holy wells and rag trees to cured warts or infertility, hauntings, witches, fairies, a tissue of lore. Butter failing to churn because of a spell. The supernatural covered a world of sins. A woman was impregnated without knowing it 'by the devil'. A missing baby had been 'eaten by a big black dog'. A neighbour's vanished child found a week later under a hawthorn bush, clothes torn and stained, unable to speak, had been 'taken away by the fairies'. What other explanation could there be?

Superstition, fearfulness, cowardice and misogyny saw dirtied, unkempt and ruined cloth, and scarred, impaired, deformed or imperfect bodies, as sure signifiers of Sin. Manifesting as licentious, immoral, deviant, diabolical corruption was as near proven as not. Sin crossed the sectarian divide, and included women victims of rape, incest or just their own desires. Demonic threat, eternal persecution, a real and tangible sense of Hell's fire and Christ's

¹ *Craic is an Irish word that means spinning a yarn, telling a tale, enjoying the conversation or passing on local news and general gossip.*

blood. The hidden exorcism of shameful birth, the casting out the illegitimate product of Original Sin, was women's feared experience.

I was a typical young woman in 1980s Northern Ireland, where female sexuality was considered dangerous, and our female bodies were known to be incendiary, volatile and provocative. With our burgeoning, blossoming and bleeding, we were a hair's breadth away from being out of control, and all kinds of societal, clerical and parental mind games kept us confused and contained. Irish women of my generation remember Ann Lovett's and other stories vividly as a warning to us not to sin. But sin we did, flushed with the exhilarating danger of desire and the potent threat of being caught. All this informed my creative exploration of the materiality of dereliction, ephemeral and intangible memories, emotions and experiences, interwoven with a revulsion-fascination for the body, blood, and dangerous designs on the sanctity of Irish womanhood.

Natalism and nationalism, the Irish unborn, the Irish born, and the Irish mother, umbilical ties that bind. I was unaware of anyone who had an abortion until I was living in England, but my paternal great-grandmother, Sarah, died in labour one night on the floor of her husband's butcher's shop. It is inferred, not directly articulated, that she continued heavy-lifting sides of meat throughout her pregnancy, seeking the miscarriage that eventually killed her.

In the 1980s, I supported – in the abstract – the right to choose, but shame and silence predominated in a culture where wearing the life-sized embryonic feet badge, the internationally recognised symbol of the pro-life movement, was normative. In the North, where I was, the dominant discourse was that of the sectarian struggle, and the harshest criminal penalty for abortion in Europe

continued until 2020 (Gentleman, 2016). The vast majority of women travelled, and still travel, to Britain for abortions, and persistent shame surrounds the issue that legislation has not dispelled.

I grew up not wanting to look directly at the murder, martyrdom and misery of the violently conflicted society around me. I created artworks that referenced older bodies, those Bronze and Iron Age bog cadavers – most likely sacrificed or executed – preserved in the acidic, anaerobic, cold and wet peat lands of Ireland. I was able to obliquely reference the murdered “Disappeared” of the Northern Irish Troubles, some now exhumed from their bogland burial places. The significance of bog, between solid and liquid, history and the now, reality and mythology, the vital body and the cold corpse, echoed the feminised liminality of a conflicted, tortured province. Bog, like Ireland, seemed steeped in and rejuvenated by death and decay.

My research and practice spans textile design, material culture and auto-ethnographic practice, manifesting in both textual and visual form and referring to (Northern) Irish women’s rights to bodily autonomy and reproductive choice, and my culture’s history of shame and repression, melancholy and mourning, abjection and death. For me, the personal is political, design is dark, and storytelling is advocacy and liberation (Harper, 2025).

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Heidi Pietarinen is a professor at the Faculty of Art and Design, University of Lapland, Finland. She holds a PhD in textile art and design, with a research focus on textile art and design methodologies, post-human design, and arts-based research. Her work encompasses research projects, publications, exhibitions, and interdisciplinary collaborations, including High Altitude Bioprospecting and the BioARTech Laboratory (www.ulapland.fi/bioartech). These initiatives have led to international exhibitions, academic discussions, and teaching engagements exploring Arctic raw materials, microbial life, the language of bioprospecting, and the evolving relationship between human and non-human research collaborators.

Rose Red Glow: Crossing Borders with Textiles

Professor Heidi Pietarinen

Abstract

Can textiles, like music, painting, sculpture, and architecture, serve as a universal cultural expression that transcends language, nationality, and borders? Examining northern Finnish textile traditions, particularly in a city of Tornio, by the border to Sweden in Finnish Lapland, and Pechenga (Petsamo in Finnish), a historically significant Arctic region on the coast of the Arctic Ocean, reveal the rich entanglement of trade, migration, and international influences.

Inspired by Nils Schillmark's *Strawberry Girl* (c. 1782) and Hannu Väisänen's *Schillmark Variations* (2021), this study considers how woven textiles, like paintings, capture layers of time and unveil transnational textiles. By viewing woven textiles as material entanglements rather than mere objects, items or representations, we gain a deeper understanding of their role in shaping textile design histories. Woven textiles actively convey and shape knowledge, and cultural memory.

***Keywords:* Textile history, woven textiles, materiality, layering in textiles, transnational textiles, arts-based research.**

Layering Materials and Textiles

The painting *Strawberry Girl* served as the foundation for Pietarinen's current textile research, *Northernness and International Influences in 18th-Century Finnish Textiles (Swedish Era, 1721–1809)*. In *Strawberry Girl* (c. 1782), the girl carrying a strawberry basket is dressed in a fashionable outfit styled for a portrait, resembling the attire of a wealthy peasant girl. This oil painting was painted by Swedish-born artist Nils Schillmark, with Ulrika Charlotta Armfelt (1771–1835), an 11-year-old noble girl at the time, as the model, (Valjakka 2021, 328). The paintings invite the viewer to explore how artistic expression can connect, intertwine, and evolve, crossing cultural and geographical boundaries, from two-dimensional paintings to tactile.

Schillmark's painting and visual artist and writer Hannu Väisänen's *Schillmark Variations* (2021), based on *Strawberry Girl*, exist in different historical dimensions. They offer insights into the layered nature of woven textiles and illustrate their diverse material possibilities in a historical northern and international 18th century context. They intertwine in unexpected ways, as the elements and details discovered in the paintings seem to take on a life of their own on the textile surface (canvas), suggesting new perspectives and interpretations to the viewer, (Valjakka 2021, 138-141). Paintings act as doorways into the narrative essence of cultures and international influences, while the artist-researcher's curiosity also extends to the historical creative potential of woven textiles (Pietarinen & Timonen 2019, 198-199, 209).

Without knowledge of regional history or material narratives, you might feel lost. However, exploring the cultural and material context unveils a deeper narrative and design experience, revealing a broader, richer world. Can textiles, like music, painting, sculpture,

and architecture, serve as a vehicle and a cultural thread that transcends language, nationality, and borders? The concept of transnational textiles highlights how weaving techniques, materials, and patterns cross borders and cultures through trade and migration. Pietarinen as an artist-researcher work at the intersection of cultures and use textiles as her vehicle, See Fukuoka Asian Art Museum 25th Anniversary Best Collection II: Echoes of Resilience 2025, 9-15).

Pietarinen explores paintings through the lens of entanglement, uncovering what often goes unnoticed and examining how layers of time shape our understanding of history and culture. We might encounter motifs that makes us wonder and sparks curiosity: What is this? Like a winter forest, paintings and woven textiles reflect multiple temporal scales: capturing fleeting moments, seasonal cycles, and centuries of transformation. A birch grove whipped by rain reveals the last five hours, snow-covered trees mark the past five days, hibernation nests trace a year's passage, while moss growth and pine bark hues unfold across centuries, (Reyer et al. 2015, 5-15). Just like the details of the woven clothing fabrics are captured in the thickness of the fabrics (drape and translucency), the patterns (striped or monochrome), the technique (woven or lace-making), the colours (the cool grey tones of the Gustavian period), and the fabric layers (seen on the head, neckline, and cuffs). They highlight the richness of the visual narrative, (Valjakka 2021, p. 138-141). (Figure 1.)



Figure 1. A mythological half-female half-bird creature of a Russian legend Bird of Sirin, Swedish three crowns and Arctic raw material sparks curiosity. Heidi Pietarinen, 2025, a block printed linen with reindeer blood, 20 x 20 cm. Photo Heidi Pietarinen 2024.

Although the northern regions of the world, including specific countries, regions, or towns, are often seen as remote peripheries, the rich textile traditions reveal a history of cultural diversity and influence. This is especially evident in northern Finland, particularly in Tornio (established in 1602) and Pechenga, in a historically significant Arctic region, (Kuusela 2024 6-11, Stén 2021, 8, 241, 411; Hederyd 1993).

By the late 18th century, Tornio had become a gateway to the exotic north as exploration, global trade, and colonialism expanded the world's horizons. The town attracted numerous visitors and explorers, especially in the 1790s, and its inhabitants began to be written about abroad, (Kuusela 2024, 6-11, Stén 2021, 8, 241, 411; Hederyd 1993). Meanwhile, Pechenga was known for its diverse cultural influences and monastery textiles. The 18th-century textiles preserved in the Pechenga Monastery stand out for their vibrant colours and intricate patterns, make these textiles exceptionally distinctive. The woven structures include silk voile,

velvet, jacquards, silver- and gold-brocade and printed linen fabrics. Patterns feature botanical motifs, geometric lines, checks, stripes and ikat. The dominant colours are black and white, including a full spectrum of shades from light to medium tones, ranging from orange to blue and rose red glow, (Stén 2021, 8, 241, 411; Hederyd 1993; Arhangelskie eparhialnie vedomosti (1896), no. 23, pp. 667–672; no. 22, pp. 630–637). By understanding the specific context of textiles, it is possible to interweave tacit knowledge with three-dimensional woven structures, despite drawing inspiration from two-dimensional paintings or fragments of textile archives.

Interweaving and Intertwining

What kinds of images and thoughts did the paintings evoke? Each painting is more than just a single image. The attention is not drawn to the painting (artwork) as an object, because there is no object, but the construction of the transnational textiles in arts-based research context. This can unfold into many layers, creating encounters with intertwining elements, (Valkeapää 2010, 19).

While textiles are often analysed through symbolic or decorative meanings, their materiality and physical transformations over time, space, trade route or migration have remained for less attention or overlooked. We can question why textiles are frequently reduced to narratives rather than acknowledged for their traditions, designs, and techniques that transcend national borders in context of transnational textiles, (Hemming & Hemmings 2015, 9 - 15).

An American feminist theorist and physicist Karen Barad's critique of the privileging of language over matter provides a valuable framework for reconsidering textiles beyond their conventional cultural interpretations. Barad proposes that reality is shaped

through intra-actions: relationships that bring entities into being rather than interactions between pre-existing things. Intra-action highlights how boundaries emerge through relational entanglements, with nothing existing independently beforehand, (Harris 2021, 2; Barad 2007).

By recognising textiles as active participants in history, cultural exchange, international trade and migration, we uncover their role in shaping knowledge and facilitating transnational connections. A perspective of how materiality of textiles is deeply intertwined, shift the focus from textiles as passive carriers of tradition to dynamic agents in cultural and historical processes.

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Melanie Sarantou is a full professor of social design at Kyushu University in Japan and an adjunct professor at the University of Lapland, Finland. Her PhD consolidated her many years of experience working and lecturing (University of Namibia 1998-2007) in the Namibian craft-design field by holistically mapping Namibian craft and design identities and narratives through a postcolonial lens. Sarantou worked as a post-doctoral researcher in the artistic research project 'Margin to Margin' (2016-2019), funded by Koneen Säätiö and Profi 2 Strategic Funding from the University of Lapland, investigating how arts and narrative practices impact marginalised women in communities in various global locations, for example in Namibia, Finland and Australia. Between 2020 and 2022, her research as a European Commission Research Fellow focused on the transformational potential of the

arts in societies living on the margin of Europe. This research, titled 'Action on the Margin: Arts as Social Sculpture' (AMASS, grant number 870621), was funded by the European Commission Horizon 2020 programme. Her recent research in the TRUST project (2022-2024) explored the role of transformational social design and arts-based methods in generating a more holistic understanding and workable solutions for ethically navigating cultural tensions existing with the processes of digitising Indigenous Cultural Heritage. Sarantou lectures in areas of Social Transformation Design at the Faculty of Design of Kyushu University. She specialises in arts-based research and bioart, enabling her research methodologies to intersect with food plants, textiles, materialities and cultural identities. Sarantou co-edited seven highly ranked books, of which four were published by Routledge. Titles include: Empathy and Business Transformation, Arts-Based Methods for Decolonising Participatory Research, and Managing Complexity and Creating Innovation through Design.

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Biomimicry's Roots in Creating Social Change

Prof Melanie Sarantou

Abstract

Design inspiration deriving from the natural world, often represented as biomimicry, can generate diverse solutions to societal complexities through social innovation. Societal challenges need solutions that drive interactions and organisational processes to deliver impact not only on a social scale, but at a broader societal realm, which comprises the social and environmental contexts of such challenges. For this purpose, researchers, artists and designers sometimes adapt or reject behaviours and patterns observed from nature to create innovative solutions. An escalating need is how to change our interactions and relationships with our communities and the natural environment to enable futures that can better deal with societal challenges.

***Keywords:* BioDesign, Biomimicry, Societal Challenges, Communities, Natural Environment, Non-humans**

Introduction

Nature remains an unlimited source of inspiration. Nearly a quarter of a millennia ago, Latour (1999) called for breaking with modernist frameworks by moving to alternative agendas that consider the natural environment and include non-humans to sustain life on a scarred planet. The previous couple of decades also saw a rise in interest in attempts to use biology, design and engineering to reshape natural systems. BioDesign is an area of practice and research that includes non-humans and, specifically, living

organisms in creative processes. With the aim of developing more sustainable futures, the concept of social biomimicry is explored to reach beyond the obvious observations of nature, for example, the study of social insects. This brief exploration asks: "How might biomimicry drive societal change?" and "How might BioDesign inform and support designers' reflection on understanding social change?" Social design should include areas of practice and research such as BioDesign to implement the farther reaches of nature.

Theoretical Considerations

The term biomimicry is associated with Janine Benyus (1997), who, in her seminal work titled *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*, describes the fundamental dimensions of humanity's connection to the natural world. She defines biomimicry as the practice of learning from and mimicking nature's forms, processes, and ecosystems to challenge the status quo by driving change that can create sustainable solutions (Benyus, 1997). Due to inspiration flowing from nature, living organisms and other than humans, the results of these processes are often studied and mimicked for deriving solutions to design challenges through, for example, research or product-service development.

Gough et al. (2021, p. 1583) introduced the concept of 'bioaffordances', which refer to biological organisms' inherent properties, functions, or capabilities that can be analysed, re-interpreted and applied in design processes. These affordances arise from organisms' natural behaviours, structures, or processes. They can inspire innovative interactions and solutions to various design challenges by applying art, engineering, or technology. These authors define BioDesign as using an organism's affordances by introducing the Bio-Inquiry model, which integrates user-

centred, scientific, and critical inquiries for designing interactive artefacts. Such artefacts are extended to the intersection of BioDesign and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) to shape future technologies.

Some forms of BioDesign use Living Artefacts, extending their usefulness to design through their *livingness* and throughout their use (Kim et al., 2022). Karana et al. (2020, p. 37) understand BioDesign as living organisms such fungi, bacteria, or plants as part of the materiality and 'material sources' of design processes. They (Karana et al., 2020) proposed a framework for designing artefacts, viewing livingness as a biological, ecological, and experiential phenomenon. Thus, explorations of BioDesign occur more frequently in artefact design and materiality, HCI, architecture (Ng, 2020), and other areas such as the development of brand identity.

BioDesign is less frequently used in social innovation contexts. More closely related to social processes, Roshko (2010) explored BioDesign in educational methodological development, while with my co-authors, I have opened up possibilities of BioDesign in socially transformative processes using biotextiles (Sarantou et al., 2024). This research explored theories of change in creative bioart experiments to analyse process flows and key tipping points in transformational change that can be informed by biological growth or decline. In the same vein, Karana et al. (2020, p. 37) note that opportunities for interactive design present themselves in the 'livingness' of artefacts created from such living organisms. Such notions present the clues how biomimicry can become a valuable approach to creating solutions by drawing from the bioaffordances presented by our engagement with non-humans. However, when viewing Benyus's (1997) theories somewhat closer, her referral to the fundamental dimensions of humanity's connection to the

natural world specifically indicates nature as model, measure and mentor. Therefore, the earliest form of biomimicry (a term coined by Benyus) was directed towards creating social value.

Discussion

In the figures below, documented from my biotextile experiments conducted at the Bioartex Laboratory at the University of Lapland in Finland (2021-2022), I draw from Benyus's (1997) referral to nature as model, measure and mentor to illustrate the more direct connotations to community values drawn from biomimicry that can serve BioDesign in social contexts.

My biotextiles in Figure 1 represent socially specific themes such as connections and disconnections, or what Christensen and Jensen (2011, p. 146) refer to as 'roots and routes', illustrating how biomimicry and the livingness of the biotextiles can inspire social design practice. This example can be based on Benyus's (1997) theories of nature as social model by referring to untangling and re-tangling of social connections and relationships. The biomimicry also illustrates how social realities on the surface of a social fabric are not always as they seem.



Figure 1: Biotextile experiments. Photography by the author (2021-2022)



Figure 2: Biotextile experiments. Photography by the author (2021-2022)

My biotextiles in Figure 2 illustrate the role of nature as a social measure, where obvious harmonious co-existence (first image) and healthy roots (second image) can lead to, or even hide, social

demise. These images may be useful to social designers to detect tipping points and guide the implementation of social measures with communities to prevent such drastic or unexpected social change. However, amidst the social decline mimicked by the rotting roots of the sunflower seedlings (Figure 2), intricate web-like growth (third image), reminiscent of sheer silky textile, sets in. This form of continued growth, which is better detected through microscopic photography, signals any society's ability to transform into at first undetected new forms of growth amongst the hideous rot which can be interpreted as social demise.

The biotextile in Figure 3 mimics nature as social mentor as connotations to education and learning are evident. For example, the growing roots do not attach well to the wool bed (first image), which may be interpreted as a social fabric, yet growth continues. At the same time, it may represent the detachment of the roots while growth continues. In educational contexts, this may mimic the detachment from a mentor embedded in the social fabric is essential for social growth to continue. While some seeds may sprout, others don't; some may grow tall and strong, while others don't (third image).

Figure 3 mirrors how differences in the seedling's growth can mimic learning. Some mentors may be disappointed at the speed of growth, yet often they do not realise that educational development may occur through different pathways, remaining undetected or taking on different directions. Learning may show itself quite unexpectedly and in dissimilar temporalities despite the seeds being sewn under similar conditions.



Figure 3: Biotextile experiments. Photography by the author (2021-2022)

Conclusion

These biotextile explorations present new opportunities for BioDesign as biomimicry could well inform social design processes apart from the usual engineering-based or product design approaches, for example studying spiders' legs for improving robotics (Göttler, 2021). Although such research is utterly relevant and important, the continuously pressing and changing needs for social innovation offer ample avenues for further research and scope for improving our complex societal challenges. In extending Benyus's (1997) biomimicry framework for human connection using nature as a model, measure, and mentor, BioDesign should be further explored as a mirror of social transformation. Thus, I invite future social design practitioners to contemplate the following questions:

- **How can biomimicry inspire resistance to unsustainable social and environmental futures?**
- **How can the values connected to design be changed through biomimicry, embodied and holistic social design and practices?**

- **How can collaborations with communities and non-humans, including digital tools and expressions, lead to early detection and resistance to unsustainable outcomes in society by drawing from bioaffordances?**

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BIO GEOMETRY DESIGN WORKSHOP

Dr. Biljana Jovic

Abstract

Creative platform Geometry workshop started in year 2012, (logo shown on Image 1 left and photo from Curious EU project) always included fantastic artists as collaborators working together with students so currently specially extended gratitude goes to the best artist in Serbia Dr. Art Milica Rakic. She is serving as Art Director of Geometry Workshop and constantly adding great additional value. Bio Geometry Design Workshop is using geometrical knowledge as a powerful tool with biology as a source of inspiration that leads to design that must be sustainable and eco-friendly in absolutely natural way.

Keywords: Biology, Geometry, Art, Bio-Design, Workshop



Image 1: Logo of the creative platform GEOMETRY WORKSHOP and photo by Tanja Drobnjak Curious project Bio-design

Introduction

Geometry Workshop was established in 2012 in cooperation with, at that time, student Miloš Tripković as a creative platform designed for students of Landscape architecture and horticulture as non-obligatory and non-gradable based on activities. Art and science overlapped and intertwined so that innovative methods and results gained were recognised as quite interesting in the domain of design inspired by biology – biological design or bio-design by using contemporary technology and great influence of art that must be always present. In that way, in accordance with sustainability goals, research results gained were obviously based on biological knowledge and geometry representing hard sciences but artist who collaborated in design procedure gave extremely strong contribution and without that artistic impact - conceptual bio design solutions that as results could not stand. This type of trans-disciplinary approach is shown in the 3D model of Natalie's Ramonda Pavilion results. For bio-inspiration, the plant species *Ramonda nathaliae* P. et P., is chosen as it is interesting not only because of cultural value for Serbia but also for its unusual traits of poikilohydry and its very limited range in Balkan. The shape of the flower is very simple and consistent, so designing final form can easily be extracted from one flower petal to start experimental generative modelling. Delicate flower petal is transformed into the Voronoi pattern, by using software tools, and a 3D model of the Natalie's Ramonda pavilion is created. http://admc2017.graphicscience.jp/finalist/10_index_detail.html

Asian Digital Modeling Contest 2017 make results and bio-geometrical approach in design quite obvious and clear. As one of 11 finalist on this competition there was an opportunity to show results, in addition to an interview with competition jury, an exhibition of 3D models printed were held at Tokyo University of

Technology (TUT) in Tokyo, Japan August 6.-8.2017, <http://admc2017.graphicscience.jp/>. Asian Forum of Graphic Science (AFGS) opened fantastic opportunity to contribute to Art and Science domain as Conference Committee member with possibility to be enriched by reviewing papers and chairing sessions during AFGS conferences (Image 2).



Image 2: AFGS 2023 Shenzhen, China, August 7.-10. 2023

BioDesign Curious project

Amazing experience was collaborating with University of Art in Belgrade by invitation that came from Laboratory of interactive art, Faculty of Drama Art to join the Curious EU project. Four countries participated: Belgium, Italy, Bulgaria and Serbia. CURIIOUS – Culture as Unique Resource to Inspire, Outreach & Understand Science <https://www.projectcurious.eu/> shows how through Augmented Lecture (AL)- theatre performance in “Vuk” theatre in Belgrade, Serbia (Image 3) technology played an important role.

Visitors participated through QR code answering questions before and after theatre performance. Also team collaborator – coauthor of performance Ivan Lusic Lik (architect and light designer) made fantastic video materials based on scientific work and based on images from paper published Artificial intelligence used for final video production. All was directed by absolutely amazing Iva Olujic (theatre performance director) Sound design was fantastically done by Aleksa Nikolic. So, our performance was selected to be played in English and recorded (accessible in open format on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgHPvJZACJo>). One more time AL performed by invitation from the Center for *the Promotion of Science* in Serbia on OpenSciComm (Open Science Communication) International Conference in the Museum of Cinema Art (Yugoslav Film Archive November 22nd 2022 in Belgrade, Serbia). Based on published papers in this domain text for theatre performance was changed and questions for the public questioner were made in the simplest possible way.



Image 3: Photo by Tanja Drobnyak Augmented Lecture at theatre Vuk in Belgrade, Serbia

Augmented Lecture 'Biodesign' is presented in a way to be untestable to people 12 years old and started to be quite popular, hence, many students especially in master and PhD studies at the

University of Belgrade continue to research this domain under my mentoring/supervision.

Workshops and series of lectures in India 2019

Cumulus Association 2019's grant at Rovaniemi Conference in Finland opened up a new horizon for extended activities around the world. First step was India, a great experience where Bio-Geometry workshop with series of lectures and an exhibition at the end was arranged at the ARCH College of Design and Business from 16th September to 3rd October 2019 and were successfully conducted.

Besides combining knowledge of biology, geometry and art to design, on this special occasion to work abroad on sites in local cultures played one of the crucial roles that was also included and was visible in the final artwork produced during the workshop. Fantastic opportunity to cooperate with talented, hardworking and smart students from India where they have been encouraged to show and include cultural values which were highlighted and shown in their final results in the on-campus exhibition.



Image 4: India experience at ARCH College of Design and Business

Workshops and invited lectures in China

China's experience involves great conditions for the workshops, especially with high level of technology involved, really gave strong support for an optimistic future. Students showed fantastic enthusiasm in team work. Pedagogical approach, 'learning by doing' method was applied, so we visited green areas and students took photos and drew freehand sketches based on that they started to use hi-tech for geometrical modelling and visualisation. It is stressed out that we are actually co-creating with nature and recreating with technology all the time. Results gained in very a friendly and a supportive atmosphere were amazing and definitely exceeded expectations in very positive ways. During lectures and discussions it was great to hear how new and original ideas were coming along and how big possibilities were inspired by nature but by adding additional original cultural values innovative ideas were created.



Image 5: Bio geometry and Bio graphics in China

Dealing with bio-geometry and bio-graphics highlighted the aim to gain bio-designed conceptual solutions here dedicated to open space area accessible for public use, all in sustainable eco-friendly way. Delivering lectures and accomplishing workshops in prestigious Universities in China like: CAFA, WUT, BIGC, HIFA, 869 Design school, Gengdan University of Technology in Beijing –

Academy of Design opens for us additional inspiration for future work in a hi-tech eco-friendly way.

Conclusion

At early stage activities of creative platform Geometry workshops were conducted at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Forestry, Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture since students have by curriculum obligatory teaching courses quite fine knowledge of biology, geometry and graphics. This combination of knowledge opened up quite a solid base to start to combine this knowledge and start to explore appropriate available software to design elements for public use in open public spaces. Conditions for work are still quite modest here but luckily completely eco-friendly. Showings in public, starting with making pure and simple geometrical models created by students and following with making minimalistic geometrical photos that are exhibited in the faculty spaces from 2012 to events like Belgrade Photo Month 2016,2017,2018 and Triennale of expanded media 2016 and 2019 organized by Serbian Association of Fine Arts.

As one of plenary speaker at EU Culture Capital 2023 city Veszprém in Hungary on Conference gave great possibility to explain process of collaborating with 6 fantastic female artists from Serbia: Anica Vučetić, Nina Todorović, Šejma Fere, Nataša Teofilović, Milica Rakić and Marica Radojčić (1943-2018). <https://symmetry-hu.com/index.php/2023/03/03/folk-architecture-vernacular-architecture-from-the-traditions-to-the-future/> Through the plenary presentation titled: CREATIVITY VIA ART AND SCIENCE: GEOMETRY WORKSHOP story about Geometry workshop as a creative platform, is briefly presented. The workshop started in 2012, and was primarily designed for students of all levels at the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture, Faculty of

Forestry, University of Belgrade but also opened to the public at the Museum of Science and Technology in Belgrade Serbia where nowadays most of the collaboration activities is going on.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iI86bAC5bgo>

Designing bio-design workshop including bio-geometry and bs within creative platform Geometry workshop could not be possible without great input and help from fantastic famous contemporary artists. Thanks to art director of Geometry workshop Dr. Art Milica Rakic, future is bright and still growing giving always something new in a very sensitive, delicate and emotional way.



Artwork: Dr. Art Milica Rakic, art director of creative platform Geometry workshop

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2015-2016, Ministry of Culture, Serbia (initiator and co-author of two projects dealing with Contemporary Art collection on the Faculty of Forestry)

2021 and 2022, Ministry of Culture, Serbia (author of two projects - Contemporary Art collection on the Faculty of Forestry)

2022 Bio-design; AL – Augmented Lecture, at Theatre “Vuk”; performed on 14.11.2022. and on International Conference “OpenSciComm”, Belgrade, Serbia, Museum of Yugoslav film archive; performed on 24.11.2022. International Art and Science project Curious 2022; University of Arts, Faculty of Drama Arts, Laboratory for Interactive Arts, Belgrade, Serbia (co-authors: Ivan Lušić Liik and Iva Olujić)

Biljana S. Jovic: author of bilingual reviewed Catalogues for two exhibitions (2017, 2021):

Beyond Geometry at the Student Cultural Center (2017) ISBN 978-86-7299-264-9, COBISS.SR-ID 245809676

Selected invited lectures for students of Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture, Landscape architectural graphics at the Faculty of Forestry, University of Belgrade (2021) at the Faculty of Forestry, University of Belgrade 12.5. - 22.6.2021. ISBN 978-86-7299-329-5, COBISS.SR-ID 43170569



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Unveiling Food Design Activism

Dr. Francesca Zampollo

Abstract

This paper introduces Food Design Activism, a specialised branch of Design Activism tailored to address food system challenges such as sustainability, equity, and justice. Food Design Activism integrates the philosophy and practice of Design Activism within the diverse field of Food Design, encompassing its 14 sub-disciplines. It explores how designers can leverage this framework to reimagine and reshape food systems, creating solutions that are innovative, inclusive, and meaningful. By exploring its principles and examples of spaces of application, the paper argues for the urgent need to apply activist approaches within food systems to achieve transformative change and societal impact.

Keywords: Food Design Activism, Design Activism, Food Systems, Food Design, Sustainability, Food Sovereignty, Food Justice.

Introduction

In this paper, I will be proposing and introducing the concept of Food Design Activism, a branch of Design Activism applied specifically to food systems. Food Design Activism uses the philosophy and practice of Design Activism to reshape food systems in light of challenges related to sustainability, justice, and equity.

While Design Activism broadly seeks societal change, Food Design Activism operates within the multifaceted discipline of Food Design, encompassing its 14 sub-disciplines: Food Product Design, Design With Food, Gastronomy, Food Tech, Agriculture, Design For Food,

Food Space Design, Eating Design, Food Service Design, Marketing and Communication, Critical/Speculative Food Design, Food System Design, Sustainable Food Design, and Policy Making and Activism (Zampollo, 2023). This article discusses the basic food-specific character of Food Design Activism; its principles in general; and its conditions for systemic changes in food.

Design Activism

Design Activism utilises Design to create forms of societal change related to social, political, environmental, and economic issues. Fuad-Luke (2013) defines it as “imagination and practice applied [...] to create [...] counter-narrative[s] aimed at generating and balancing positive social, institutional, environmental, and/or economic change” (p. 27). It is precisely the capacity for provoking debate, challenging assumptions, and fostering alternative narratives that gives Design Activism its transformative potential (Hendren, 2015).

Markussen (2013) illustrates how the crossover between aesthetics and politics in Design Activism enables the transformation of society by way of the Design process. Such a crossover underlines the potential of Design Activism to challenge powers, seek justice, and advance sustainable development. The principles of Design Activism (Zampollo, 2024) — revealing, political, contesting, disruptive, designerly, and real — serve as a foundation for Food Design Activism, contextualised within food systems.

Food Activism

Food activism looks to alter food systems to attain social, economic, and environmental justice. Counihan and Siniscalchi define it as

"efforts by people to change the food system across the globe by modifying how they produce, distribute, and/or consume food" (2014, p. 3). Key areas of food activism are food justice, sovereignty, and security — all of which do call for the right for everyone to have proper nutrition and fight against exploitative practices.

Within her critique of industrial agriculture, Vandana Shiva (2018) underlines ecological and social harms. For Shiva, it is the way in which industrial systems — importantly — place profit over and above sustainability — that has thrown up very serious environmental degradation and health crises. Food activism is the way to promote such systemic injustices through demands for agroecology, community resilience, and local control over food systems.

Fusing Design Activism and Food Activism

Food Design Activism combines the principles of Design Activism (Zampollo, 2024) with the goals of food activism to address food-specific challenges. This fusion creates a holistic approach to reshaping food systems, integrating creativity with critical reflection to foster justice and sustainability. As Fuad-Luke (2009) notes, Design Activism generates "counter-narrative[s] aimed at balancing positive social, institutional, environmental, and/or economic change" (p. 27).

In food activism, the goal is to create interventions that foster equitable access to healthy, culturally appropriate, and sustainably produced food. Food activism often involves critical reflection, challenging dominant food industry practices and proposing new ways of thinking about food, much like Hendren's (2015) description of Design Activism as a means to provoke political

debate and engage the public. Thus, Food Design Activism not only tackles the societal issues surrounding food but also uses Design as a tool for both resistance and transformation.

In fusing together Design Activism and Food Activism I propose the following definition of Food Design Activism:

Food Design Activism is the deliberate use of Design practices to pursue equality, justice, and well-being for human beings and vitality of all natural elements of a food system: plants, animals, soil, water, and air. Food Design Activism pursues food sovereignty, food safety, food justice, and agroecology. Food Design Activism reveals, contests, and disrupts unjust power structures, gives voice to marginalised communities, and initiates real, actionable changes.

Principles of Food Design Activism

Here we explore the seven Food Design Activism principles. Six of these are the same foundational principles of Design Activism, discussed at length in a previous paper I wrote (Zampollo, 2024): revealing, political, contesting, disruptive, designerly, and real. The six Design Activism principles are here briefly described and then contextualised within the topic of food systems. The seventh principle is unique to Food Design Activism, which is here described as principle number one: Food Design Activism Changes Food Systems.

I propose that only projects that address all seven principles are examples of Food Design Activism. Projects that address some or most of them are likely to be examples of activism, Food Activism, Design for Social Innovation, Critical Design, etc.

1. Food Design Activism Changes Food Systems

Food Design Activism addresses interconnected aspects of food systems, such as production, distribution, consumption, and waste management. It uses systems thinking to create well-rounded solutions that balance environmental, social, and economic needs (Pretty et al., 2006). By incorporating sustainability principles, Food Design Activism promotes more resilient and equitable food systems.

For instance, urban food forests illustrate how Food Design Activism fosters sustainable ecosystems that provide fresh produce while enhancing biodiversity and encouraging community involvement. The Beacon Food Forest in Seattle is a notable example, prioritising ecological balance and social inclusion.

2. Food Design Activism Is Revealing

Food Design Activism uncovers systemic injustices and hidden power dynamics within food systems. By bringing these structures to light, it raises awareness and motivates change. Markussen (2013) highlights Design's role in exposing societal inequities, while Bridle (2012) stresses the importance of understanding networks for effective action. One example is carbon footprint labelling, which reveals the environmental impact of food products. This transparency enables consumers to make informed, eco-friendly choices while encouraging companies to reduce emissions. Similarly, initiatives like Toast Ale, which brews beer using surplus bread, draw attention to food waste and inspire systemic changes.

3. Food Design Activism Is Political

Design is inherently political; it reflects and shapes societal values. Food Design Activism confronts dominant ideologies to advocate

for justice and equity. Rancière's (2010) concept of dissensus underscores Design's ability to challenge hierarchical structures and promote alternative perspectives. Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs are a clear example of political engagement in food systems. These initiatives build direct relationships between farmers and consumers, bypassing corporate supply chains to ensure accountability and fair distribution of resources.

4. Food Design Activism Is Contesting

At its core, Food Design Activism challenges entrenched norms to create opportunities for transformation. Markussen (2013) describes contestation as vital for disrupting dominant ideologies and enabling alternative approaches. The "ugly food" movement, for example, contests cosmetic standards that lead to food waste. Companies like Imperfect Foods sell "ugly" produce, promoting sustainability while reshaping consumer attitudes. Similarly, seed-sharing platforms empower communities to challenge corporate control over agriculture and preserve biodiversity.

5. Food Design Activism Is Disruptive

Disruption plays a key role in introducing new possibilities by challenging established systems. Food Design Activism disrupts profit-driven food systems by advocating for localised, inclusive models. Alternative Food Networks exemplify this by connecting producers and consumers directly, bypassing traditional supply chains. Apps like "Too Good To Go" and "Olio" combat waste by redistributing surplus food to those who need it. These initiatives redefine waste as a resource, advancing sustainability and enhancing food security.

6. Food Design Activism Is Designerly

Being "designerly" means using creativity and iterative problem-solving to address complex systemic challenges (Cross, 1982). Food Design Activism employs participatory and co-design methods to empower communities in reshaping food systems. Examples include food hubs and community gardens, which bring local stakeholders together to co-create solutions for food insecurity while emphasising sustainability. Participatory workshops further enable communities to design equitable and accessible distribution systems.

7. Food Design Activism Is Real

Food Design Activism delivers tangible, lasting improvements to food systems. It moves beyond abstract ideas to produce practical, actionable interventions. Markussen (2013) emphasises the dual political and aesthetic nature of Design Activism, which transforms everyday experiences. Examples include public food-sharing fridges and surplus food redistribution systems. These initiatives provide immediate benefits to communities while addressing broader issues like food waste and insecurity. Seed banks and libraries offer another impactful solution, preserving biodiversity and supporting local farmers.

Conclusion

Food Design Activism offers a transformative way to tackle challenges within food systems. By combining the principles of Design Activism with the goals of food activism, it advances justice, sustainability, and equity. From uncovering systemic inequities to implementing practical solutions, Food Design Activism highlights how Design can reshape food systems and improve lives.

Through this approach, designers can magnify their impact, address urgent global issues, and contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future.

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Dr Yanfang Zhang

Associate Professor at Kyushu University

Born in Shandong Province, China, Yanfang Zhang specialised in international trade and worked in international trade at the Chinese branch of a Japanese trading company before coming to Japan. Zhang came to Japan with a passion for Japanese wabi and sabi and studied design, earning a master's degree from Tokai University and a doctorate in art and engineering from Kyushu University. From 2008 to 2015, Zhang was in charge of universal design and international design work at the design company GA-Tap, where she gained a lot of experience in design, including the Hakata Station Shinkansen signage project and the universal design of Fukuoka Bank together with her colleagues in the design team, from 2015 to present. At Kyushu University, Zhang is in charge of work such as Innovation Studio Fukuoka, Universal Design for Fukuoka City Science Museum and Design for SDGs, where she is responsible for regional cooperation and social implementation of research results. In September 2017, Zhang established 4 All Design Inc. to change society through universal design and matching excellent Japanese design with the vast design market in China. Zhang would like to continue working with my colleagues, dream big and contribute to society through design.

A Study on the Commonalities and Differences between Participatory Design Practice Projects and Participatory Design Education Programs

Dr. Yanfang Zhang

Abstract

This paper bridges the author's dual experiences as a universal design practitioner and an educator focused on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It examines the transformative potential of integrating participatory design methods with SDGs-based design education to address societal challenges. Drawing from seven years in industry and eight years in academia, the author explores strategies for harmonising practice and education, emphasising a commitment to the principle of "No one will be left behind." The paper emphasises the use of participatory research methods to foster mechanisms for engaging diverse stakeholders and to create interactive learning environments. It also promotes the acquisition of practical skills through prototyping and the evaluation of outcomes, aiming to cultivate designers capable of delivering sustainable and inclusive solutions. Such efforts contribute to achieving the SDGs and advancing the culture of societal design while expanding the societal impact of the next generation of designers.

Keywords: *SDGs, Design Project, Design Workshop, Design Method, Participatory Research Method*

1. Introduction

After obtaining a Ph.D., the author worked as a universal designer for seven years at a design company. During this time, the author collaborated with diverse groups of people, including individuals with disabilities, the elderly, and foreigners, while conducting on-site investigations for various design projects. Subsequently, the author returned to university and, for the past eight years, has been actively engaged in SDGs-related projects, including designing SDG initiatives, building networks, and creating platforms, while also contributing to research and education.

This paper integrates insights gained through practical experience as a designer and as a design educator. It aims to examine the role of design in solving social challenges. The core of this examination is the participatory approach and the principle of "leaving no one behind," which is central to both universal design practices and SDGs-based design education. The paper will analyse how these initiatives contribute to the realisation of societal design. Drawing from these experiences, the paper explores the potential for future contributions to design research and education and the broader social impact of these approaches.

2. Universal Design Project

Since 2008, the author has worked as a designer on many universal design projects, such as those for Fukuoka Bank, public sign systems, JR West Japan's Hakata Station, and Fukuoka City Children's Hospital. The author briefly explained one of these universal design projects, the Fukuoka City Children's Hospital. The project involved designers from various fields, such as architecture, landscape, space, and graphic design, as well as students from local elementary and middle schools, volunteers, and hospitalised

children and their families. It aimed to reduce both the physical and psychological burdens on children with illness. A total of 1,000 students from elementary and middle schools created materials, which the designers used to craft stories and integrate them into the hospital space.

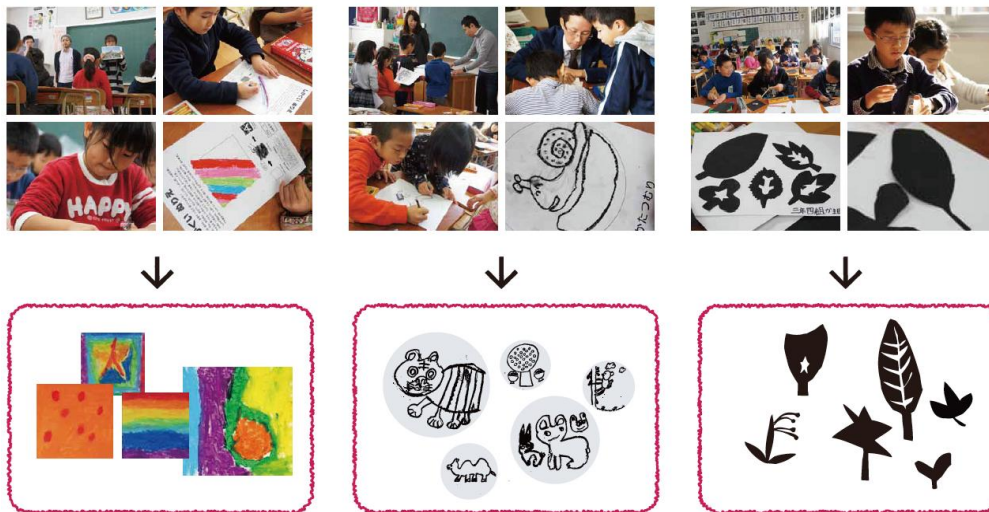


Image 2.1 Fukuoka City Children's Hospital Project Ideation Workshop



Image 2.2 Fukuoka City Children's Hospital Design 1st Floor



Image 2.3 Fukuoka City Children's Hospital Design 4th Floor

3. SDGs Design Education Program

In 2015, the author joined the Graduate School of Design at Kyushu University and began expanding research and education related to design. Through initiatives like the Global Goals Jam (GGJ) and the SDGs Design International Awards for students worldwide, the author has been actively involved in SDG-focused design education activities. Specifically, the GGJ is a two-day international public-participatory workshop aimed at considering sustainability from a global perspective and generating local solutions to SDG challenges.



Image 3.1 SDGs Design Workshop Prototyping in 2016



Image 3.2 SDGs Design Workshop Pitching Session in 2017



Image 3.3 SDGs Design Workshop 2019 Video

4. Findings

The common approach in design practice projects and SDGs design education initiatives is participatory. This paper uses Participatory Research Methods (Duea, et al. 2022; McIntyre, 2007; Vaughn, 2020) to examine the commonalities and differences between participatory design projects and participatory SDGs initiatives based on the processes involved.

| Process | Commonalities | Differences | |
|--|---|---|---|
| | | Universal Design Project | SDGs Design Education Program |
| Problem Definition and Goal Setting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflects the opinions of diverse stakeholders and defines the issues - Participants play a central role in goal-setting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focuses on solving specific product or service-related problems - Goals are concrete and short-term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goals are broad, including social and environmental sustainability, with a long-term perspective - Focus on policy and societal impact |
| Participant Selection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasizes diversity, including all relevant stakeholders - Voices of users and beneficiaries are central to the process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focuses on specific user groups (e.g., people with disabilities, elderly) - Small-scale, focused on specific communities (Image 4.1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involves stakeholders across various sectors and countries - Includes policymakers, NGOs, and experts in the process (Image 4.2) |
| Idea Generation and Prototyping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses participatory workshops and design sprints to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prototypes are created and iteratively improved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes pilot implementation of policies or programs |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| | co-create solutions through trial and error | through short cycles - Rapid prototyping is emphasized | - Aimed at making large-scale changes and achieving broader impacts |
| Implementation and Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observes actual usage and impact and reflects feedback in the next phase - Emphasizes a feedback loop for continuous improvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adjustments are based on user experience, reflecting improvements in real-world applications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluates societal impact or community-wide outcomes - Feedback is used to make adjustments to large-scale policies or initiatives |
| Outcome and Impact Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluates outcomes both quantitatively and qualitatively, identifying success factors and challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance and satisfaction of products or services are often the evaluation criteria - Focuses on user satisfaction and functionality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation is based on broader criteria such as sustainability, social inclusion, and environmental protection - Focuses on societal impact and long-term contribution |

Table 1. The commonalities and differences between participatory design projects and participatory SDGs initiatives

UNIVERSAL DESIGN PROJECT STAKEHOLDER

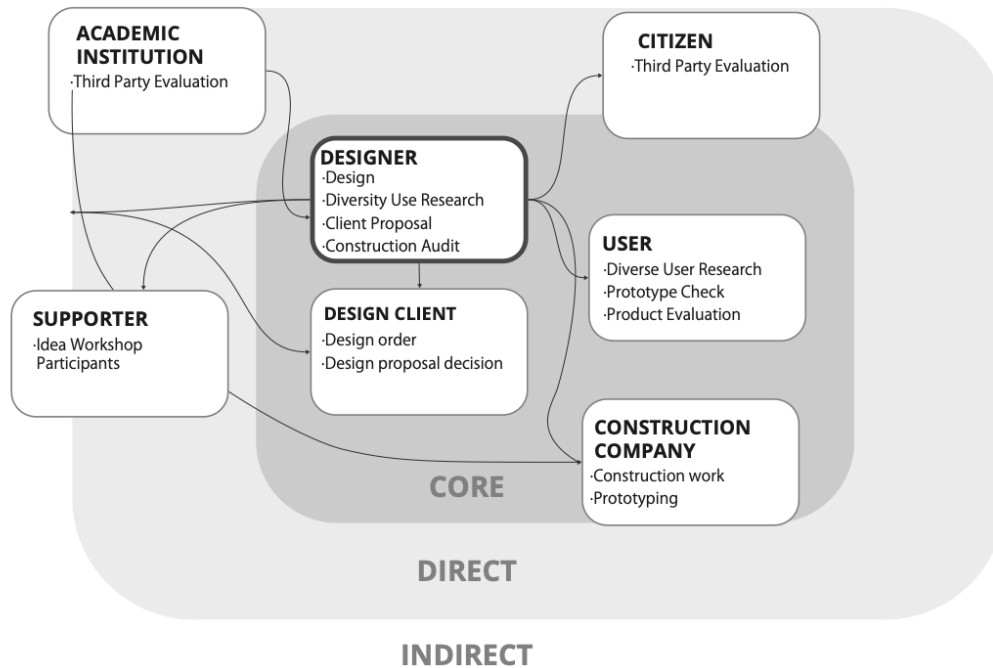


Image 4.1 Stakeholder of Universal Design Project

SDGs DESIGN WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDER

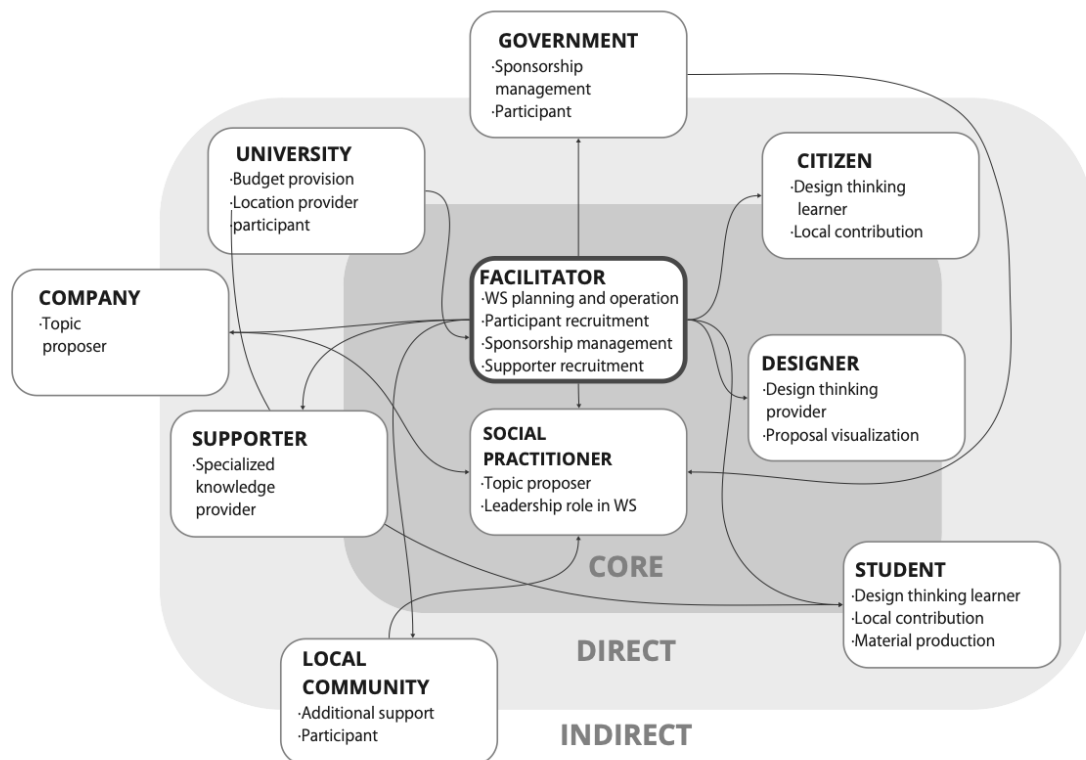


Image 4.2 Stakeholder of SDGs Design Program

4.1 Reflection on Commonalities and Differences

The shared emphasis on participant agency and collaborative processes underscores the participatory nature of both design projects and SDG initiatives. However, the differences reveal the distinct scopes and objectives of each approach. Design projects tend to address concrete, short-term challenges, while SDG initiatives aim for broad, long-term social transformations. These distinctions are reflected not only in their processes but also in their outcome evaluation criteria. By understanding and leveraging these insights, future integration of participatory methods in both fields can be tailored to meet the unique demands of each context, enhancing their effectiveness and societal impact.

5. Conclusion

To effectively integrate design practice with design education, a new approach is needed that centres on addressing societal challenges and enhancing participatory methods. At the initial stage of problem identification, it is crucial to incorporate the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into education and strengthen the focus on societal perspectives. Specifically, training should enable students to clearly define problems based on local communities or policy contexts, using project-based learning that closely resembles real-world scenarios. This approach helps bridge the gap between educational settings and practice, fostering more impactful and concrete initiatives.

In the selection of participants, standardising methods for involving diverse stakeholders is essential. Educational curricula should include practical techniques such as interviews, observational studies, and co-creation workshops—foundational elements of participatory design. This ensures that students

acquire skills directly applicable to real-world challenges. Moreover, engaging with participants from various cultural and professional backgrounds fosters multicultural perspectives and enhances communication skills, both critical for addressing global issues.

The collaborative process requires integrating educational feedback mechanisms. Throughout the project's lifecycle, regular reviews of outcomes should be conducted, enabling students and practitioners to learn from each other. Establishing this bidirectional learning environment maximises the educational value of the entire process. Such an approach allows students to experience real-time improvements and skills development, promoting the seamless integration of practice and education.

At the implementation stage, it is important to emphasise prototyping in design education. Providing opportunities for students to test ideas quickly in real-world contexts and learn from their failures develops their problem-solving capabilities as practitioners. By iteratively refining prototypes, students can gain hands-on experience in addressing on-the-ground challenges, fostering a deeper understanding of practical design approaches.

Finally, in the evaluation phase, integrating methods to measure the social impact of design outcomes is imperative. Students should learn to evaluate their work using both quantitative and qualitative measures, focusing on aspects such as sustainability and social inclusion. Post-project evaluation sessions involving stakeholders can help students comprehend the broader societal implications of their design efforts and prepare them for future initiatives.

By implementing these strategies, a seamless integration of design

education and practice can be achieved, nurturing the next generation of designers who are both practically skilled and socially conscious. This approach supports the development of a new design culture founded on the shared commitment to the principle of “leaving no one behind,” a core value of both participatory design and the SDGs.

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Dr Elena Douvlou is a registered architect both in UK and Greece and currently the Associate Dean of School of Architecture, Art and Design at Metropolitan College in Greece. She has been previously the Head of School, Programme Leader of the MArch Architecture & Urbanism and Programme Leader of the MArch Architecture & Urban Design, both RIBA PART II validated courses. She has led successfully the School through nine RIBA I & II exploratory visits and validations. She is an Adjunct Professor at the Boston Architectural College USA, Sustainable Design Programme since 2009. She started her academic career as a Senior Lecturer at Portsmouth School of Architecture UK, 2003-2008. Her expertise are in Thermal Comfort, Bioclimatic Design, LSA, LEED assessment, sustainable urban design and regeneration. She has been involved over the past 6 years in various projects and courses related to Global Intercultural Competence Learning as the co-coordinator of

GLE (Global Learning Education) projects with DePaul University in Chicago, USA and Metropolitan College (2019-2025), and she is the co-editor and author of a book published by Springer Nature in the SDG series, "Intercultural Competence Through Virtual Exchange: Achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals" (<https://link.springer.com/book/9783031764172>). She has over 25 years of experience in architectural academia leading the design studio of 4th and 5th year and supervisor of Final Thesis with topics in Architectural Design, Sustainable Design and Urban Regeneration. She has lectured in various institutions in Europe, the Middle East and the USA. She is a published author of articles and research and have supervised over 30 MSc and PhD Theses. She is a Fellow of the British Royal Higher Education Academy since 2006. She authored the Sustainability Action Plan for Alphabet Education/Metropolitan College- in April 2023.

Integrating Sustainable Design Philosophy and Pedagogy: A Reflection on Academic and Professional Trajectories in Architecture

Dr Elena Douvlou

Abstract

Architecture shapes not only the built environment but also the social fabric of communities. Despite historical barriers, women in architecture and academia have emerged as transformative forces, advocating for designs that are equitable and sustainable. By addressing issues of social empowerment, environmental responsibility, and gender inclusivity, female architects and educators are reshaping the field to better reflect contemporary values and challenges.

A career as an academic, researcher, and practitioner in architecture highlights my commitment to sustainable design philosophy. With over 20 years of experience spanning in academia, architectural practice, and research, my goal has been to reflect a holistic approach to sustainable architecture. This paper explores my design philosophy, career path, academic teaching, and sustainable design research, illustrating how each aspect of work contributes to the broader discourse on architecture and sustainability.

Keywords: *Architectural pedagogy, Sustainable Design*

Introduction

Sustainability in architecture is no longer a peripheral concern; it has become central to addressing global environmental challenges. That was not the case 30 years ago, when as a 4th-year architecture student, I opted for an elective module in Bioclimatic Architecture. I remember vividly the bright yellow colour of the main textbook with a red sun, authored by our professor. I was curious to learn about something new and exciting. This new body of knowledge led me to spend my whole summer holidays working on a European student competition on Passive Solar Design – my team's approach evidently was not groundbreaking and we did not win a prize or a commendation. But I did gain enough understanding of the field to know that this is the path I would like to explore more in my future studies. This led me to register for an MAArch at the University of Sheffield with a pathway in Architecture and Environmental Design. Even in UK, at this point, there was a very clear division between architecture professors teaching studio-based modules and professors from other disciplines teaching the more "scientific" modules.

When I decided to register for a PhD in the same field, accepting a fee-waiver and a scholarship, I joined a group of fellow researchers spending most of our time in research labs, analysing data and performing parametric simulations. At the same time there was a great need for architecture studio tutors with specialised knowledge on environmental design, prompted by a wave of popular books and star-architects. I jumped on the opportunity to enter academia while doing research, a world of retrospective feedback that I have enjoyed ever since. In the process (a few years later) I realised that knowledge on the subject was already part of our formal and informal education, embedded in every vernacular building around the world.

Design Philosophy: A Holistic Approach to Sustainability

I started photographing and reading about vernacular architecture, finding wisdom and beauty in every detail, forming my design philosophy that revolves around creating architecture that harmonises with its environment, promoting energy efficiency, and enhancing occupant comfort. Concluding my Ph.D. in "Climatic Responsive Design and Thermal Comfort" from the University of Sheffield, my research underscores the importance of bioclimatic design — an approach that relates architectural solutions to local climatic conditions. This philosophy emphasises reducing a building's environmental footprint while maximising thermal comfort, natural ventilation, and passive solar design.

One of my first appointments as a Senior Lecturer at Portsmouth School of Architecture was to lead a Diploma, urban design studio; my involvement in sustainable urban regeneration further reveals my commitment to environmental and social sustainability. Projects such as the "Urban Noesis" initiative, which focused on resilient communities in dense urban settings, illustrate my belief in architecture's potential to foster social cohesion while addressing environmental challenges (published in the 17th Venice Biennale Italian Pavillion Catalogue: "Resilient Cities"). Through these efforts, I endeavoured to advocate for a holistic design approach that integrates environmental, social, and economic considerations into architectural practice.

Bridging Academia and Practice

For a large part, my career path reflects a dynamic interplay between academia and practice. My experience as a registered architect in both the UK and Greece has enriched my teaching with practical insights, allowing me to bridge the gap between theory

and real-world application. One of my first senior roles was at the University of Portsmouth, where I led the MSc in Sustainable Architecture. This program combined theoretical knowledge with hands-on project-based learning, encouraging students to develop sustainable design solutions for contemporary urban challenges. As Associate Dean at the School of Architecture at the Metropolitan College in Greece and an Adjunct Professor at Boston Architectural College, I have had the opportunity to lead academic programs that emphasise sustainable architecture and urban design.

My engagement with the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry as an environmental consultant further solidified my expertise in managing the environmental impact of various scales construction businesses. My personal portfolio of architectural projects is deeply informed by this commitment to sustainability and over the years I have been involved in numerous projects that prioritise bioclimatic principles.

Another notable project is my work on post-industrial heritage sites, such as the Eleusina case study. This project illustrates an approach to adaptive reuse and sustainable urban regeneration, using participative design and Virtual Reality as tools. By transforming neglected industrial sites into vibrant public spaces, it demonstrates how architecture can preserve cultural heritage while addressing contemporary environmental, social and economic concerns.

Fostering Sustainable Design Leaders and Engaging with Global Discourse

In my recent publications, my aim is to demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability; by linking architectural

design with global learning and intercultural competence, I have highlighted the importance of a collaborative, cross-disciplinary approach to solving environmental challenges. My participation in international conferences, such as the 12th World Environmental Education Congress in Abu Dhabi, reflects my commitment to sharing knowledge and fostering global collaboration in sustainable design.

As an educator, I have aimed to shape the next generation of architects through innovative teaching methods. At the Metropolitan College and Boston Architectural College, I have integrated problem-based learning (PBL) into the courses I designed and taught, encouraging students to tackle real-world challenges using sustainable design principles. My courses "Sustainable Design as a Way of Thinking" and "Global Perspectives in Sustainable Design" emphasise the global relevance of sustainability in architecture.

My teaching has always been informed by my belief that sustainability is not just a technical requirement but an ethical imperative. I have always enthused students to view architecture as a tool for addressing global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and resource depletion. At the same time, I have advocated that the principles and methodologies of sustainable design are embedded early in the architectural education curriculum as students often perceive it as deviating from the norm of the process of design synthesis that could hinder and perplex their creativity.

My involvement in Global Learning Education (GLE) projects and intercultural competency workshops has further enriched my teaching. By collaborating with institutions such as DePaul

University, I have co-coordinated projects that foster cross-cultural understanding and promote sustainable development through virtual exchange programs. The collaboration expanded to include institutions and academics from various parts of the world, resulting in the authoring and co-editing of the book "Intercultural Competence Through Virtual Exchange: Achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals" by Springer Nature in the SDG series (to be published, February 2025). The book offers fresh perspectives and innovative, practical approaches to preparing learners for implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), addresses the role of academia in fostering societal change beyond teaching material, aiming to enable students to become agents of change and calls on educators to recognise and embrace their rapidly shifting roles and extended responsibilities. In the book, I present my research on the advantages and challenges of the use of Virtual Reality in providing engaging immersive and interactive learning experiences and the examination of the virtual exchange's wider pedagogical implications and advantages in developing intercultural competence, raising awareness of sustainability, and encouraging collaborative learning.

Active participation in international workshops and conferences underscores my role as a thought leader in sustainable architecture. One of my most impactful research projects was the ECOSOEN project, which analysed the intersection of economic, social, and environmental objectives in various societal models. This research highlights my belief in the interconnectedness of sustainability and the need for architects to consider multiple dimensions when designing for the future. By exploring the socio-economic factors that influence architectural design, the project aimed to push the boundaries of traditional architectural practice,

advocating for a more inclusive and holistic approach to sustainability.

As a member of architectural design award juries, including the European Architectural Awards "40 UNDER 40", I am inspired by projects that exemplify a forward-thinking respect for the environment, proving that sustainability and innovation are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing, thus contributing to shaping the global discourse on urban regeneration and sustainability.

Through the delivery of several design workshops on virtual exchange and project-based learning, I have explored innovative methods for integrating sustainability into architectural education. By leveraging digital tools and international collaboration, the aim is to create platforms for students and professionals to exchange ideas and develop solutions that address global environmental challenges.

Conclusion

Architecture, at its core, is a discipline rooted in innovation. It is about solving problems, challenging conventions, and imagining better ways for humans to coexist with their environments. My design philosophy, as shaped through my architectural education, personal experiences and aspirations, rooted in bioclimatic principles and thermal comfort, aims to provide practical solutions to contemporary environmental challenges. Through my academic leadership, I sought to foster a new generation of architects who are equipped to tackle the complexities of sustainability in the built environment. My research and involvement in international projects further demonstrate my desire to contribute on the global architectural community and to the field of sustainable architecture

discourse. Both through my published work or as a tutor in the architecture studio; it illustrates the importance of an interdisciplinary approach that considers the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. As the world continues to grapple with climate change and urbanisation, I hope that my contributions will remain relevant in emphasising the importance of collaboration, intercultural competence, and ethical design, offering a blueprint for empowering communities and advancing sustainability.

Like many other women in architecture practice and academia, it is important to assume a pivotal role in promoting sustainability and empowerment, by integrating environmental stewardship, social equity, and diversity, challenge traditional paradigms and inspire meaningful change.

In closing, I want to leave you with this thought: architecture is a reflection of who we are as a society; it tells the story of our values, our ambitions, and our dreams, and we can use any line or colour we choose to.

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Dr Anuradha Chatterjee

Pro Vice Chancellor, RV University and Dean, School of Design and Innovation

Dr Anuradha Chatterjee is a transnational feminist academic practitioner in architecture and design based in Australia and India. She holds a degree in architecture from TVB School of Habitat Studies, India, and a Masters and PhD from the University of New South Wales, Australia.

Dr Chatterjee is Pro Vice Chancellor, RV University and Dean, School of Design and Innovation. She has also held prominent academic leadership roles as Dean, Faculty of Design, Manipal University Jaipur; Dean Academics, Avani Institute of Design; and Head, Research and Innovation, Pearl Academy where she was responsible for institution building, establishing collaborative cultures of academic excellence, enhancing internationalisation initiatives and research outputs. She continues to contribute to academic excellence as Founding Chairperson, Academic Advisory

Board, Cindrebay School of Design; and past Member, Academic Council KRVIA (2021-2023); and Board of Review, CEPT (2019-2022).

Dr Chatterjee has over 23 years of experience in research, teaching and administration gained through various academic positions in Australia (University of New South Wales, University of Sydney, University of Technology Sydney, University of Tasmania, University of South Australia), China (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University), and India (Manipal University Jaipur, Srishti Manipal Institute of Art Design and Technology, Pearl Academy and Sushant School of Architecture), where she developed critical and research-based pedagogies in studio and history and theory subjects.

Dr Chatterjee has also worked in professional practice in Australia, as Senior Research Executive at PTW Architects; Senior Architectural Researcher and Heritage Advisor at Cracknell and Lonergan Architects; and Guest Curator, Customs House Sydney. She is the author of three books Surface and Deep Histories: Critiques, and Practices in Art, Architecture, and Design (Cambridge Scholars Publishing); Built, Unbuilt, and Imagined Sydney (Copal Publishing); John Ruskin and the Fabric of Architecture (Routledge); and the Area Editor (Asia) for fourth publication, The Bloomsbury Global Encyclopedia of Women in Architecture 1960-2015 edited by Karen Burns and Lori Brown (forthcoming, 98000 words for the Asia Section). Her fifth book is an edited collection titled Architectures of Ageing in Place (under contract, Routledge, 2025).

Designing Inclusion and Institution Building in India

Dr Anuradha Chatterjee

Abstract

Designing Inclusion and Institution Building in India is a narrativisation of my feminist academic leadership across three design schools in India between 2018 and 2024, using the pandemic as a marker of time, and a framework for sharpening temporal and spatial experiences. The first section of the article titled Pre-Pandemic Memories from the Western Ghats talks about my collaborative work at Avani Institute of Design, which focused on justice and diversity in building self-governing cultures of academic excellence. The second section titled Pandemic Tales from Dehmi Kalan is a reflection on my time at Manipal University Jaipur during the lockdown and the work done to construct as well as repair lost social intimacies. The third and final section of the article titled Post-Pandemic Narratives from the Start Up City which brings focus to my ongoing work at RV University on looking at institutional and curricular practices that are redesigned to ameliorate mental health issues and learning disabilities. In essence, all these engagements are about creating institutional learning and working spaces that feel and are safe. Each institution is unique in the way these opportunities become available not just as problem spaces but also collaborators and co-creators who share these affinities and can provide structures of support by way of allyship.

Keywords: COVID19, Pandemic, Designing Inclusion, feminism, Higher Education India, mental health

Introduction

Feminist academic leadership in architecture and design for me has involved co-designing work cultures and practices that are about interconnected paradigms of inclusion, emotional safety, and mental wellbeing. This is especially so in the leadership positions I have held in India across my transnational movements between Australia and India, which has given me greater agency to make positive impact in collaboration with different stakeholders across institutional ecosystems. This paper is a correlated consideration of the three most recent leadership positions I have held in India, across the pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post pandemic periods. It is a narrative on how one locates unique approaches to designing systems of care within the institutional space, by building solidarities and sensing affinities embedded within.

Pre-Pandemic Memories from the Western Ghats

My role as Dean Academics in Avani Institute of Design was positioned within the broader ambition of this wonderful institution, which was founded specifically to educate young architects and to move beyond pedagogies that have been ossified and made irrelevant by new and more experimental ways of imagining, representing, and producing architecture. In the last ten years or so, a number of new schools of architecture have been established, Avani being one of them, who aim to be the new pedagogic 'avant garde,' with many of them consisting of leadership teams that are very male dominated.² In some sense, this foreshadows what Ewa Majewska describes as "West's male-centred notion of the *avant garde*" that is defined as consisting of

² For a discussion of this, please see Reshma E. T. (2021). *Pedagogical Avant Garde in Architectural Education: A Brief History, Thesis, MArch in History and Theory, CEPT,*.

“heroic strength, bravery, success,” accompanying perceptions of breaking with the past with something cutting edge and revolutionary, advocated by “male genius [who] was solely a leader, a hero, a champion.” (Majewska, 2023). A critical/constructive response of working in this context was my paper “Damned if I Do, Damned if I Don’t” that interrogated the absence of spaces for the presencing of gendered labour and creative work (Chatterjee, 2023). This was further extended by contributors in our symposium *Gender and Academic Leadership in Architecture in India*, which was conceptualised to understand engagement of women and persons of minoritised genders and sexualities in the construction of the academy, architectural knowledge, professional identity, and academic practice amplify the need to recognise traditional and nontraditional forms of leaderships in institutions.



Figure 1: Poster, Avani Lecture Series; Figure 2: Avani Learning and Teaching Colloquium (ALTC) deliberations; Figure 3: ALTC Poster [Copyright: Author]

Continuing this work in disrupting systemic injustices in institutions, I also conceptualised Avani Lecture Series - *Building Voices, Building Alliances* – with my colleagues, whereby the curatorial perspective centred around architecture’s embeddedness within wider spatial politics and its participation in the discourse on social responsibility. We expanded the curation across class, caste, race, gender, sexuality, disability, age, religion,

linguistic, and geographical difference to hear from architects, designers, artists, activists, writers, filmmakers, community organisers, humanists, urbanists, and educators who were agents of change. Some of these initiatives were further augmented by the conversion of the Academic Review into Avani Learning and Teaching Colloquium (ALTC). The Academic Review, in its early form, was focused on examining academic success by a few experts, which was then transformed into a much more democratic form of inquiry by many, marked by resonances of mutual accountabilities of participants and workshops to co-create new academic frameworks. The aim was to create a culture of academic excellence, which is internally sustained and run by committee without always requiring leadership. And, when I left Avani during the beginning of the first lockdown, the school was a self-governing entity, both academically and administratively.

Pandemic Tales from Dehmi Kalan

As I took on a new bigger role as the Dean, Faculty of Design, Manipal University Jaipur in May 2020, I nicknamed myself as the 'COVID Dean,' having relocated to Jaipur, with double mask as soon as the flights were operating again, ready to quarantine before accessing my office in Dehmi Kalan, Rajasthan. The pandemic was incomparable to anything else in our generation in terms of the kind of rupture it created in our imaginations, our bodies, lives, societies, values, and corporealities, which remain altered forever. And while the world seemed to have moved on, I resisted the urge to forget. Jamie Foster Campbell and Zizi Papacharissi capture this so beautifully in their paper as they talk about the change of "collective notion of intimacy and rituals of connecting with others," where intimacy is defined as "trust, understanding, and exposure" developed over time, "where you are actively expressing and receiving without any judgment," and it is something

intangible yet tangible, but missed when it is not there (2021). All of this was missing, while I embarked upon the mandate to build a 'high-performance culture' and drive up the targets, whilst also building trust and team in the age of the pandemic.



Figure 4: Reflections in the Dome Building during COVID19, Manipal University Jaipur; Figure 5: Jaipur Airport; Figure 6: Office Plants during COVID19, Manipal University Jaipur [Copyright: Author]

Echoing the words of Campbell and Papacharissi: “We quickly learn how to use technology to bend time as we live through times that feel simultaneously fast and painfully slow.” (2021) Technology mediates this experience of social intimacy and is mediated by it. It is at the same time the bridge and the chasm between people and emotions. We reached across the screen on Teams, across loss digital and physical ‘connectivity,’ to our students to review design projects, provide remote site videos, virtual pin ups, all the time being mindful of fragility. Conversations with Heads and Directors around architectural pedagogies were punctuated with the sharing of news of sickness and death, loss of livelihood, creating even greater stresses to mental health and wellbeing of those around us. This increased the focus on what it feels to feel safe, at work. The pandemic created the need to socialise more than ever, leading to the expansion of the domestic realm as a public bubble. Initial bonding over where to find vaccines in short supply led to a sense of solidarity during this traumatic period, and these vaccine photos

became unshareable as people died in thousands because the vaccines could not be made available at speed. One of the creative outputs for me during this time, and a beacon of hope, was my special issue “Life, After Life,” for *Textile: Cloth and Culture* that featured eleven papers on narratives of hope and resilience in communities of traditional textile crafts across India (Chatterjee, September 2022).

Post-Pandemic Narratives from the Start Up City

While the pandemic is ‘forgiven, not forgotten,’ and Indian cities have returned to ‘normal,’ the sense of uncertainty and risk remains embedded within our social body. My appointment as Dean, then Pro-Vice Chancellor at RV University, must be made sense of in the context of the post-pandemic. RV University was founded on 16 June 2021, coinciding with the end of the second and the deadliest wave of the pandemic, especially in India. The post pandemic sense of time and pace feels different due to the perceived slowing down of time, and it feels like everything is going faster than before (Wittmann, 2020). This is exacerbated by the energy of a startup university, which for academic and professional staff feels like every day is like EVERYTHING! NOW! The losses and the trauma of the pandemic remain an absent presence, within transformed families, social structures, and physical and mental health. Perhaps this informs our collective focus on making changes to design education, with respect to mental health and neurodivergent learners, and a response to this recent historic context. Mental health in education in India was already becoming an emergency given the history of student suicides and self-harm due to academic pressures (Pandey, 2017). Post pandemic, these stresses increased for people already at risk, and persons who are neurodivergent. These concerns are captured in many of our academic projects as well as advocacy work.



Figure 7: Cover Page, A Collective Mental Health Dossier; Figure 8: Diversity and Inclusion Workshop, RV University; Figure 9: Neurodiversity Workshop, RV University [Copyright: Author]

My elective titled **Mental Health by Design** tried to grasp the concerns for students, designers, and users, in which one of the most interesting outcomes was the co-written *Policy Changes in Design Education: A Collective Mental Health Dossier*. Elective offered by a colleague, Accessible Campus, expands the definition of accessibility from physical to social, economic, and cultural accessibility. Our School Committees – Diversity in Learning and Teaching Design Committee and Student Progression – are the advocacy structure established to inform real capacity for change. Faculty workshops on learning disabilities, mental health for teachers and students, and neurodivergence are conducted to reach agreements and consolidate shared knowledge that can be applied to an inclusive redesigning of learning, assessments, marking, shift outdated ideas around perfection and mastery in design education, and assemble a group of people who provide pastoral care not because they must but because they want to. Building on these efforts is my work to bring recognition to as well as resolve poor systems design in a startup university, which create stressors on academic and administrative staff, including but not limited to increased workload and backlogs, chaos and uncertainty that have the propensity to worsen existing mental health issues

and undermine institutional wellbeing.

Conclusion: Preparing for More Change

In conclusion, my work as an academic practitioner and leader is driven by feminist principles of designing spaces of emotional safety and mental wellbeing. And while it is gratifying to look back and reflect, the cognisance that all of this is 'under fire' is humbling. We are now looking at climate change in the face, with increased disruptions like heat waves, and rain, flooding, road closures across the country. Combined with political and technological changes, academic leaders must now look at designing future ready systems in higher education institutions which will continue to guarantee inclusion, justice, safety and well being for all.

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Dr. Grace Lau

Curatorial Director, Fine Art Asia

A pioneer of creative thinking and an integrator of ideas and approaches for strategic innovation in developing business, creating exchange, and empowering user engagement; with a proven track record in driving cross-disciplinary research that generates results and impact convergence of ideas and development of new business models and services.

With diversified background in design and business; Grace is distinguished for an entrepreneurial mindset, creative problem solving, and was known to be able to offer innovative solutions to operational challenges and leverages decisiveness to implement solutions while minimising risk and maximising performances.

The Dilemma of a Female Designer/Academia/Curator/Project Director/Researcher/etc. - juxtaposition of viewing design in a designerly way versus a casual perspective

Dr. Grace Lau

Abstract

The paper presents the intersection of perspectives of a female professional, who wears the many hats of a teacher, a curator, a project manager, a researcher in her work-life at the same time a wife, a mother and a friend (to many people) in her personal-life, by mapping her life journey and approach to life to a research model she created for a user-spatial-interaction study on female business travellers in boutique hotels. The paper attempts to bridge the two distinct perspectives and to show how expandable a design research model can go beyond its designated perimeter; or even further to make relevance in simple things of our everyday life.

In exploring how the two perspectives intersect and correlate, the paper further reflects on the significance of design training in a one's life, and examines how design training can impact a person's approach to life. The author attempts to explain how such approach is able to facilitate her navigation between work and personal life, from being a visionary leader in office, an inspiring tutor in the design studio to a mother who leads her kids to creating fun things, admire the fine things in life, to finding their own career paths; ultimately helping her strike a good balance and building a fulfilling life experience. The paper ends with a brief note on the challenges

of being a woman in an industry dominated by men and how any difficulties can be overcome by 'design thinking'.

All in all, the paper aims to inspire other women.

Keywords: Dilemma, designerly way, design thinking, emotions, experience design, female designer

Introduction

For a long time, design has been viewed as a problem-solving process and design training used to be discipline-focused. But as design continues to evolve influenced by technological advancements, societal changes and emerging challenges, the role of design becomes more integral to various aspects of society, culture, business, and technology. The evolving landscape of design emphasises collaboration, innovation and inter-disciplinary crossover and exchanges (Kramer 2024); more importantly, empathy for understanding the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another person through recognising and connecting emotions.

Trained as a communication designer, major in advertising design, I started my career in advertising. Yet the time working at different global 4A's agencies allowed me to learn about other kinds of industry like banking, insurance, retail and telecommunications. Knowledge I gained was out of the remit of the curriculum of a conventional design programme. The opportunities have also allowed me to see how design and business work together. The realisation prompted me to apply for a Master Degree in Business Administration and from then on, my world opened up with a lot of opportunities than simply designing. My years in the university creating new academic programmes, while serving in the executive

committee of an industry organisation curating and designing exhibitions on design and business and coordinating events for industry collaborations, somehow started a surge of energy and motivation in me to connect things from different facets, sectors, practices to create things bigger than expected. Layered ideas, diverse perspectives, detailed planning with iterative process building onto interdisciplinary connections and collaborations are in my work DNA as well as my personal philosophy as I believe by cross-referencing and bench-marking I can foster a richer content and a better experience.

The tranXperience Matrix (fig. 1) I developed for the study of my PhD research on female business travellers in boutique hotel is a complex three-dimensional model that has incorporated attributes from spatial study, interior design, and emotional design. The model illustrates how two-dimensional theories can be connected to three-dimensional ones, presented in a volume of three 'roomscales' that builds up the complete homey experience of a hotel stay. The construction of the Matrix supports the idea that emotions can be used for establishing the connection between inhabitation and geometric spaces – that reinforce the concept of how "inhabited space transcends geometric space" (Bachelard 1958). The model was a result of a two-tier research engaging ethnographic and phenomenological approach, built on similar parameters which can be easily referenced across each other.

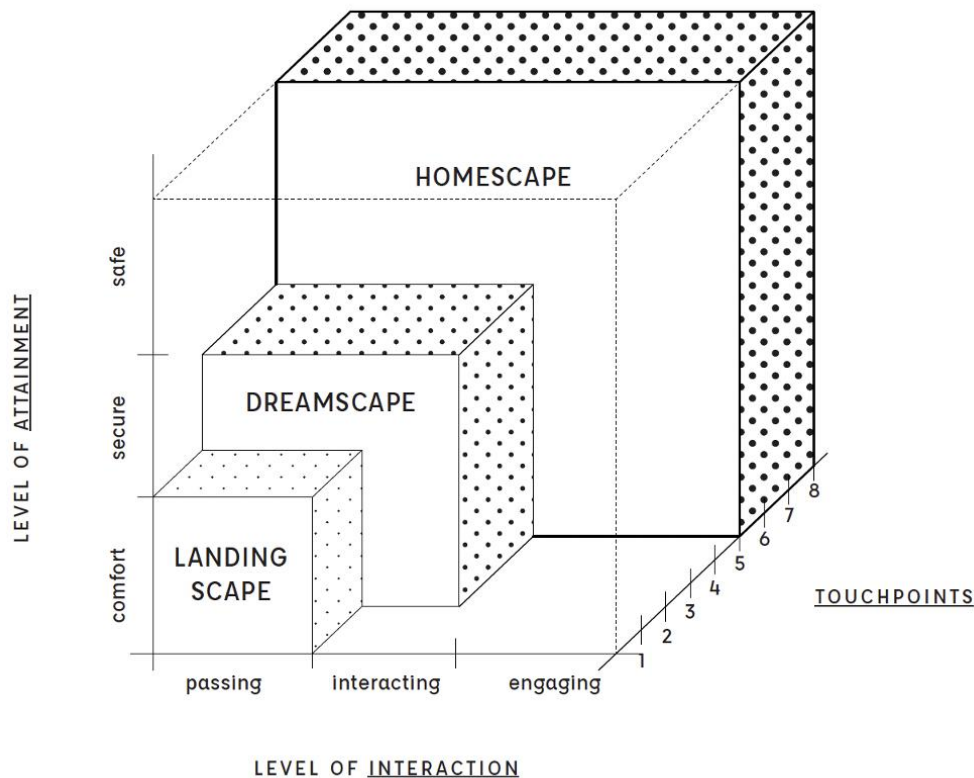


Fig. 1 tranXperience Matrix

While the model is built on a robust academic framework and structured in a very definitive way based on various disciplinary concepts and theories, it could possibly be viewed as a map for a personal life journey. The touchpoints correspond to the choices we make in life and people we meet along the way and the emotional attainment relates to our sense of achievement and level of satisfaction gained from making our way through life experiences. The three 'roomscape' that build up the complete homey experience of a hotel stay can be analogies to stages of life containing emotions, experience and things we encounter. As explained earlier, the model is a complex one and allows for cross-referencing of ideas and concepts from different fields and disciplines, the complexity of it is indicative of my philosophy of life and reflective of my comprehensive and diverse background. The following will explain each of the 'roomscape' and how each of them denote a life-stage by looking at it from a less academic (casual) perspective.

Landing Scape – where life begins

The Landing Scape is defined by emotions of comfort, the contents of the scape align with the theory of Territoriality and Existential Space in the creation of a territory and the definition of an initial existence; interaction is mainly by visual contact. Applying it to the research of female business travellers in boutique hotels, the Landing Scape is the area where the guests stepped into the room, the very small space where the door opens to the interior of the guest room. Looking at the model in my casual perspective referencing it to my life journey, my landing scape is the School of Design, Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

As I landed at the School of Design, what I saw as I entered the design studio on the first day is comparable to the visual impact of what the female guest encountered at the guest room on her entrance. The set up of the initial space in a guest room can elicit a sense of comfort when the female guest gets visually intrigued by an initial touch point such as a nice side table and a painting on the wall that prompts the guest to feel comfortable about the room setting. The touchpoints meant to prompt the guest to roam around and connect with the room further. Similarly, the setting of the studio, the drafting tables and the posters pinned up on the walls create a 'good first impression' and makes me feel that I am then a member of the design community and prepares me emotionally to start my design education at the School.

Dream Scape – where things get manifested

The Dream Scape is defined by a higher level of feelings of security and interaction that involves a contact between the guest and objects in the guestroom. The Dream Scape, echoes the reflective level of emotional design theory, is meant to be an area of

imagination and 'dreaming'. It is where new ideas balance the sense of familiarity about objects and the space to create 'delight'.

Referencing the academic perspective to personal one, my development in the Dream Scape involves a lot of touch points, a lot of changes and moving across fields and industry landscapes. In the process, I incorporated ideas I learnt from other practices to create enhancement to the original concept of the thing I work on. Like a biennale was turned into a retail opportunity, ultimately setting up a twin-cities brand and the establishment of a design hub for nurturing young talents. In this scape, I attained a high level of security by mastering the skills of analysing options and resolving dilemmas.

Apparently, designers are often in dilemma working through the design process to identify the most relevant solution(s); dilemmas are a natural part of the design landscape. 'Dilemma' was one of the first words I learnt at the School of Design, and it's also one of the things we were taught to deal with using all the skills and knowledge during the course. When entering the Dream Scape of my personal life, the experience I acquired working in the different positions are like those touch points in the guest room that interact with the female guest to allow her to establish a sense of familiarity while opening up vaults for imaginations. In life, I may fall into dilemmas when faced with options, but they also give me the sense of security as I know I have abundance to play around with.

Home Scape – where things settled

The Home Scape is where the Level of Attainment and the Level of Interaction is highest. The touchpoints contained in this scape are able to trigger the emotion of being safe (or settled). As a concluding scape, this scape allows for personalisation and

creativity to allow for maximum experience. This is where emotions attainment is at its ultimate level for the experience we aim to create for any space. Relating it to life experience, it's the level where we obtained the biggest joy to what we have been trying to achieve out of all the work that we have done and the paths we have roamed through.

The importance of relating design to life and the extension of our understanding for how design works is not just limited to the context but to life in general in order to match up to the idea of how design can make our lives better. If the Home Scape represents a state where female business travellers feel most safe in a guest room with all the relevant touchpoints and the kind of emotions to be stimulated out of all experiences, the Home Scape is where I am fully capable of manipulating what I have acquired and be able to handle dilemmic situation by pulling the kind of skills, knowledge, ability etc. to resolve conditions and look at things from different perspectives and share this understanding using different 'languages'.

Conclusion

The parallels between the designerly perspective and that of the casual one reveal a shared commitment to understanding human, be empathetic, be adaptable and to promote partnership (or collaboration). Most importantly, by attempting to connect an academic research model to a personal life experience, it is able to instate that design may not be delineated by disciplines. It also demonstrates that concepts can expand beyond and extend across disciplines; a piece that exemplifies how PhD in design can be a drive to "shift object-centred paradigm to design practice characterised by systems" (Meredith 2008) – from the taxonomy of hotel to ontology of hotel living, extending into ecology of objects,

emotions and activities, and arrive at the axiology of values; and helps to project about design indicators of priorities.

P.S. - Design Thinking

Theoretically, design thinking refers to the set of cognitive, strategic, and practical procedures used by designers in the process of designing. Design thinking is also something related to survival and breakthrough for when we try to explore alternatives and to innovate. On the aspects of how design training can impact a person's approach to life and the challenges of being a woman in an industry dominated by men and how any difficulties can be overcome by 'design thinking', I recall that my final years in the design school has been particularly challenging, with me being the only girl in the advertising major of seven students. That actually may have prepared me to grow and survive in the male-dominated industry. Learning to speak their language and admire their values have been a major part of the everyday life in the design studio. Sometimes I just have to shape-shift into a 'male-me' and dress in a more gender-neutral way or join them as they gobble down a fibre drink before class in the morning. But apart from tackling the physical and technical side, I found a better way around taking a ride down the emotional track. My trick was to introduce my girlfriends to them so my best friends became their girlfriends and then, I have my allies! Exactly, by integrating design thinking with the practice of 'thinking out-of-the box' can lead to innovative solutions; for designing and surviving life situations!

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Eija Salmi FRSA

Secretary General at Cumulus Association

A global citizen and advocate since 1990 for international education and research in art, design and media. Responsible to empower the next generation of youth by encouraging their alma maters to collaborate and play an impactful role to place the needs of the earth first and to create the right balance between people, planet and any profit.

Background in finance, art history and languages, jumped from finance to university internationalization. Happy to join as speaker, provocateur, participant to inspire and support. Eija has been leading the Secretariat General of Cumulus since 1990, and playing a key role in connecting design education and innovation. Cumulus secretariat is a hub, a centre of the network suggesting connections with satellite activity. Ready to navigate and carry responsibilities to process things in uncontrolled and unlimited situations and environments. To create credibility with thought leadership, able to align and leverage as keys. Optimism and tomorrow are burned in her DNA.

Cumulus is a non-for-profit association, endorsed by UNESCO and the only leading global association of art and design education and research. Cumulus represents a dynamic ecosystem for internationalisation and global mobility, knowledge exchange, and collaboration since 1990 established by Aalto University in Helsinki with Royal College of Art in London. Today 395 members from 71 countries, reaching with partners over 2500,000 students, academics and staff, which demonstrates the importance of collaboration in a 21st century higher education landscape that is increasingly complex and global.

Bring the planet forward. Cumulus is the entry code.

Breaking out of the Glass Jar

Eija Salmi FRSA

Abstract

As the Secretariat General of Cumulus Association since 1990, I have witnessed the evolution of design education and practice working closely with our members. Every era brought forth its own concerns to sustain quality design education through internationalisation and relevance. This article expresses my personal thoughts to explore the main challenges facing design education and practice from my first-hand position at Cumulus Association, working and collaborating with hundreds of design institutes and programs from around the world. These issues include but are not limited to: Students' employability, the benefits of internationalisation, and higher education funding.

Keywords: Cumulus, Planet, internationalisation, design universities, student employment

Introduction

Having for decades deep dived in and with the operations and strategy of internationalization of design universities, my passion is to ask how to truly impact these institutions in society, and in the business industry? I am not an educated designer, but through my long internationalisation career, I have gained a life-long design experience as the Secretary General of Cumulus, where I have witnessed at first-hand the evolution of design education, research and practice at a global level. Through this experience, one of the many concerns and purpose of the universities has been student employability. This paper will explore the main global challenges

facing design universities more than ever, such as students' employability, internationalisation, funding, and relevance.

University systems and positivity

Is a design degree sufficient to secure student employability? A simple answer is, yes, of course our graduates get properly employed with the knowledge received. However, there is now the question of impact, which influence the universities' funding going beyond just the employability of students. Many universities support various ways of industry impact and learn from them to develop their funding mechanisms provided the funder understands and aligns with the universities' vision. If the university understands what must be done for successful funding, or if it carefully analyses the surrounding environment, locally and globally. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) dictate these funding opportunities, however, who develops the KPIs and how and what is a KPI? The KPI places the responsibility on the university to perform and deliver, however, the student also has the responsibility, not only the institution. How is this responsibility developed? At home, school, the university, or in social or community settings, taking into consideration the interaction between students and the digital environments, such as mobile phone and social media. Who is responsible for these KPIs? An advisory board, or ministry officers, owners of the university? Or does AI tell us what to do? Or aliens from the outer space? Given that this is not a far fetched idea should we activate ourselves with the outer space to be able to break out of these questions?

Breaking the Glass Jar

What does breaking out from the Glass Jar mean? Is it a collective force to strengthen the knowledge used? Research outcomes or the

knowledge by a degree holder in art, design and media. Do we use the design language that is guaranteed for us to understand each other? The power of media and other diverse power mechanisms also impacts this understanding. Should we turn power tools to truly nurture our disciplines, should we start using unmanned systems to help our contribution to serve the planet properly, unmanned systems developed with our strong contribution? We do need to take a new action, however what is an action? To share knowledge without cannibalism, that individual matters in the institutional context and institutions serve the individual. This is a circle that cannot be vicious. It must be fruitful enabling individuals to shine bright.

The institution must be a well functioning leadership, respecting the whole community with careful listening and respecting all, not creating systems that are automated and exclude excellence and by doing so causing disaster to the outcome. This is how university partnerships are destroyed in the first phase of the action. This type of leadership also influence the students' outcome, to offer diversity of design and leadership solutions to analyse the potential. Important for a group not to prevent positive actions by living deep in its own excellence. Following the seven blunders of the world by Mahatma Gandhi, having analysed what may lead to violence or chaos, may inspire us to the next phase of change.

Change

A Change. What do we need change for? Is change a marketing method? We are the dynamic design institutions, where we have the opportunity to interact directly with this planet and ability to break out through design innovation. A well known fact or is it? Is change creating excellence? How can we instigate change in the high-ranked and prestigious universities that exist with their

recognised rooted institutionalisation, we all know and respect universities. Graduating from these universities is a mechanism for success. How about the universities that encourage entrepreneurship endeavours, whose graduates get impact and employ themselves, how do we give these institutions the due respect? These reflections I have witnessed first-hand with our member institutes and so change is coming but how do we as a design community leverage this change?

Conclusion

Respect. Is it the same as recognition? Is it about the work done by a generation at the institution? What happens when the next generation takes over? How do we maintain the excellence and the standards? It would be sad to if the institution loses its ethos, or the next generation does not respect the work done by the past generation. This is an area to explore to ensure continuity of design excellence in education and in practice and to pre-empt these issues and find a way to repair.

Breaking the Glass Jar means going back as a global design community to explore these important values, change, respect, diversity, and Inclusion. Where are we going as a community, and as individuals? Getting involved in competitions such as SDGs by the United Nations, and by UNESCO, European Union, government entities, professional design associations, international professional associations, other universities, industry, and advisory boards, is one way, however is this enough? We continue to live with all of these entities as designers, artists, and as creative people.



Letter from the Chairman's Desk

By Sunil Bhatia PhD

One day, while cooking in the kitchen, I accidentally burned my hand with the flame of a gas burner. There was a high burning sensation, and I immediately put my hand under running water to relieve the burning.

While resting on my chair I found that the product of fire had guided me that 'do not play with fire' or 'while working with fire be vigilant and alert' not attentive while using will be dangerous. Our ancestors were also aware of the inbuilt message of fire from the days of the birth of humans on this earth. The fire existed with the message "Do not play with me I have an element to destroy and can change the state". Fire was existing before the birth of human and other living beings on earth. It was available in the form of volcanoes, and much later forest fires (because of friction of two trees, or a tiny bird bringing burning straw to keep her predator away from her from a distance holding in peck or some time extreme heat of the sun). The fire was scaring every living being.

It was the human who thought of management of fire and idea of ignition of fire and realized fire is hidden in some form and need proper way to allow to surface. They were not with scientific mind but realized rubbing can ignite spark. They designed some tools for ignite fire. This idea helped in designing the fire element stored and made the first matchstick that produced a spark for catching fire anytime anywhere. The fire was stored at the tip of a match stick

in the form of a chemical and as someone strikes the surface that friction generates a spark. It was the idea of storage that led to the art of fire management and helped in establishing superior power among all living beings. I salute our ancestors for how they used the idea of storage that guided and led to controlling fire. They designed three levels of storage, one at the tip of the match stick so as not to strike accidentally and ignite a fire, the second was protection from the environment especially moisture that can affect the chemical spark, and packed in a matchbox with sliding opening and closing, ultimately user kept the matchstick in such place in the kitchen so that no one face accidental challenge. They fragmented ignition of fire in many sequential steps. He has to pick before his mental level feel of the need of spark. The journey from match stick to replacing the concept of the knot(it joins two ends of a rope) of joining to a metal with the help of heat with welding to rocket technology of storing the fuel for jet motion.

It was the product of fire that was with elements to destroy but the idea of storage of fire changed the face of human progress.

What is storage? It is generally felt that what is to be needed in future and should be retain in original state . Our human or animal body has storage of blood under the skin and it is transported from one place to another with the help of a network of veins. How come they realized that a small cut may ooze that much blood that exhausted stored blood and proved the reason for death? Another factor is that it specific cuts the veins that allow blood to go fast and humans or animals die faster. Every animal human knows one of the reasons for death and it focussed on not allow to cut that specific veins that may prove reason of quick death. In simple word we call it 'survival instinct'. In fact it is the idea of protecting the storage of blood that was for future and current use for life.

It is the storage of an egg in the ovary of an adult woman that guides the man with the help of the biological process of mensuration.

It is the concluding special issue of March 2025 Vol-20 No-3 as Guest Editor Dr Dolly Daou, Member of Advisory Board for Cindrebay University's, Dubai, Co-founder and Co-Chair of Food Think Tank, Cumulus Association, Kingston Citizen of the Year 2024, Australia and it is the continuation of February 2025 Vol-20 No-2 . She has made both issue of February and March 2025 a true international with her unique concept and idea. I feel like to stand to salute her for making our publication to next level. Once again thanks to our Guest Editor.

With Regards

Dr. Sunil Bhatia

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Forthcoming Issues

Year 2025 declared as Women's Designer April 2025 Vol-20 No-4



Valerie Fletcher *has been executive director since 1998 of the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD). Fletcher writes, lectures, and works internationally. She generates opportunities for IHCD and has broad oversight of all consulting and design services. She created the IHCD User/Expert Lab which has over 400 people engaged in the evaluation of places, products, and services. Her current research focus is generating data to inform inclusive designing for the Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPoC) and for people with a spectrum of brain-based conditions. Fletcher's career has been divided between design and public mental health and she is the former deputy commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health where she oversaw the largest participatory planning process ever undertaken in a*

state mental health system. She was Principal of Fletcher Studio Design from 1978-1985.

She is councilor for the International Association for Universal Design (IAUD) in Japan. She has created an international universal design benchmarking project for the government of Singapore. She serves as Trustee of the Boston Architectural College. Fletcher has a master's degree in ethics and public policy from Harvard University. The Boston Society of Architects awarded her the Women in Design award in 2005. The Helen Hamlyn Research Centre at the Royal College of Art in London named her Inclusive Design Champion 2022.

May 2025 Vol-20 No-5



Debra Ruh:

Advocate for Inclusion and Technology for Good
Debra Ruh is a globally recognized market influencer and advocate for the inclusion of people with disabilities. With over 500,000 followers on social media, she is among the top 2% of voices on LinkedIn, making her a powerful voice in the spheres of technology for all (Tech4All), technology for good (Tech4Good), and AI for good (AI4Good).

Debra has spoken at numerous multinational corporations, the United Nations, and the World Bank, emphasizing the importance of accessible technology and inclusive practices. She has authored three impactful books on disability inclusion and the role of technology in creating a more equitable world. She also a speaker

for US State Department.

As the founder of Ruh Global IMPACT, a think tank focused on disability inclusion, Debra has driven forward-thinking initiatives and fostered global dialogues on these critical issues. Additionally, she co-founded Billion Strong, the world's first grassroots identity organization for people with disabilities. Billion Strong aims to unite the global disability community, enhancing their visibility and support network.

Debra's efforts are rooted in her belief that technology can and should be a force for good, creating opportunities and breaking down barriers for all. Her work continues to inspire and lead the way toward a more inclusive and accessible world.

June 2025 Vol-20 No-6



Maria Kaplan

Mara Kaplan is a national expert and trailblazer in the realm of creating inclusive spaces for people of all abilities and ages to truly belong. As the lead consultant for PlayPower on inclusion, Kaplan pioneers initiatives shaping the future of playground equipment and play spaces nationwide. Her journey began as a parent advocating for her son with disabilities, leading her to establish an indoor inclusive play haven and serve as the executive director of the Center for Creative Play for over a decade. Kaplan's impact extends through her consultancy "Let Kids Play," where she conducts dynamic workshops, collaborates with landscape architects, and works with community groups on designing playgrounds while also developing online training on inclusion and

child development. Through her unwavering dedication, Kaplan continues to transform communities and champion inclusivity across the country.

July 2024 Vol-20 No-7



Prof Brigett Wolf

Brigitte Wolf is a retired professor of strategic design and design theory focussing on sustainability. Her background is in industrial design and psychology. She held a chair at KISD (Cologne International School of Design), Wuppertal University and the German University Cairo, Egypt. In addition, she was guest lecturer at universities in Cuba, Brazil, Argentina and Iran. Recently she has been conducting seminars at ecosign/Academy in Cologne and supervising PhD students at Wuppertal University and the University of Teheran.

August 2025 Vol-20 No-8



Shannon Iacino is a Professor of Industrial Design and Design for

Sustainability at Savannah College of Art and Design. Her work specializes in leveraging technology to advance the principles of the circular economy and design for social good. With a background in sustainable design and emerging technologies, Shannon integrates innovation and ecological responsibility into her teaching and research. Her work emphasizes creating systems and products that minimize waste, promote resource efficiency, and address societal challenges. Through interdisciplinary design projects, Shannon collaborates with students and communities to develop impactful solutions that balance technological advancement with sustainable practices.

New Books



Sunil Bhatia

Design for All. Volume-II

Drivers of Design



<https://www.morebooks.shop/shop-ui/shop/book-launch-offer/74414a1df61c3d2ea8bf46ae7e3c0cf31769f261>



Sunil Bhatia

Design for All

Drivers of Design

Expression of gratitude to unknown, unsung, unacknowledged, unnamed and selfless millions of heroes who have contributed immensely in making our society worth living, their design of comb, kite, fireworks, glass, mirror even thread concept have revolutionized the thought process of human minds and prepared blueprint of future. Modern people may take for granted but its beyond imagination the hardships and how these innovative ideas could strike their minds. Discovery of fire was possible because of its presence in nature but management of fire through man made designs was a significant attempt of thinking beyond survival and not

doubt this contributed in establishing our supremacy over other living beings. Somewhere in journey of progress we lost the legacy of ancestors in shaping minds of future generations and completely ignored their philosophy and established a society that was beyond their imagination. I picked up such drivers that have contributed in our progress and continue guiding but we failed to recognize its role and functions. Even tears, confusion in designing products was marvelous attempt and design of ladder and many more helped in sustainable, inclusive growth.

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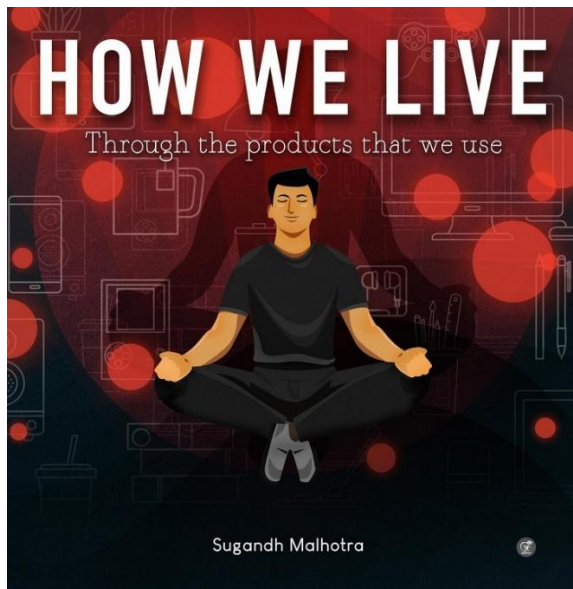
it is available on www.morebooks.de one of the largest online bookstores. Here's the link to it:
<https://www.morebooks.de/store/gb/book/design-for-all/isbn/978-613-9-83306-1>

HOW WE LIVE: Through the Products that We Use

Authored by : Sugandh Malhotra,

Professor, IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay (INDIA)

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Products tell stories about their users, their likes, tastes and journeys. 'How We Live' book aims to outlay, document and study the used products and create a persona of the users through a brief narrative. This visual documentation book is an excellent resource to observe and acknowledge the subtle differences in choices that are driven by nuances other than personal preferences.



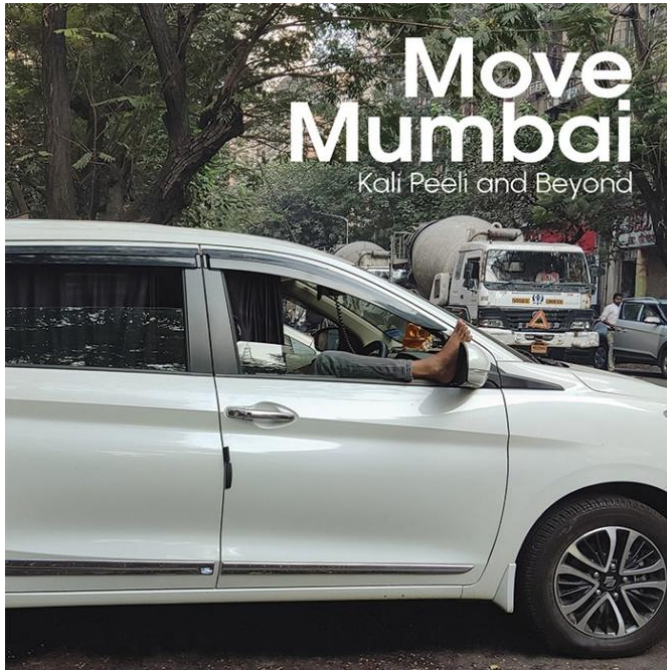
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MOVE MUMBAI: Kaali Peeli and Beyond

Authored by : Vivek Kant, Sugandh Malhotra, Angshuman Das, Tekhenutso Theriah

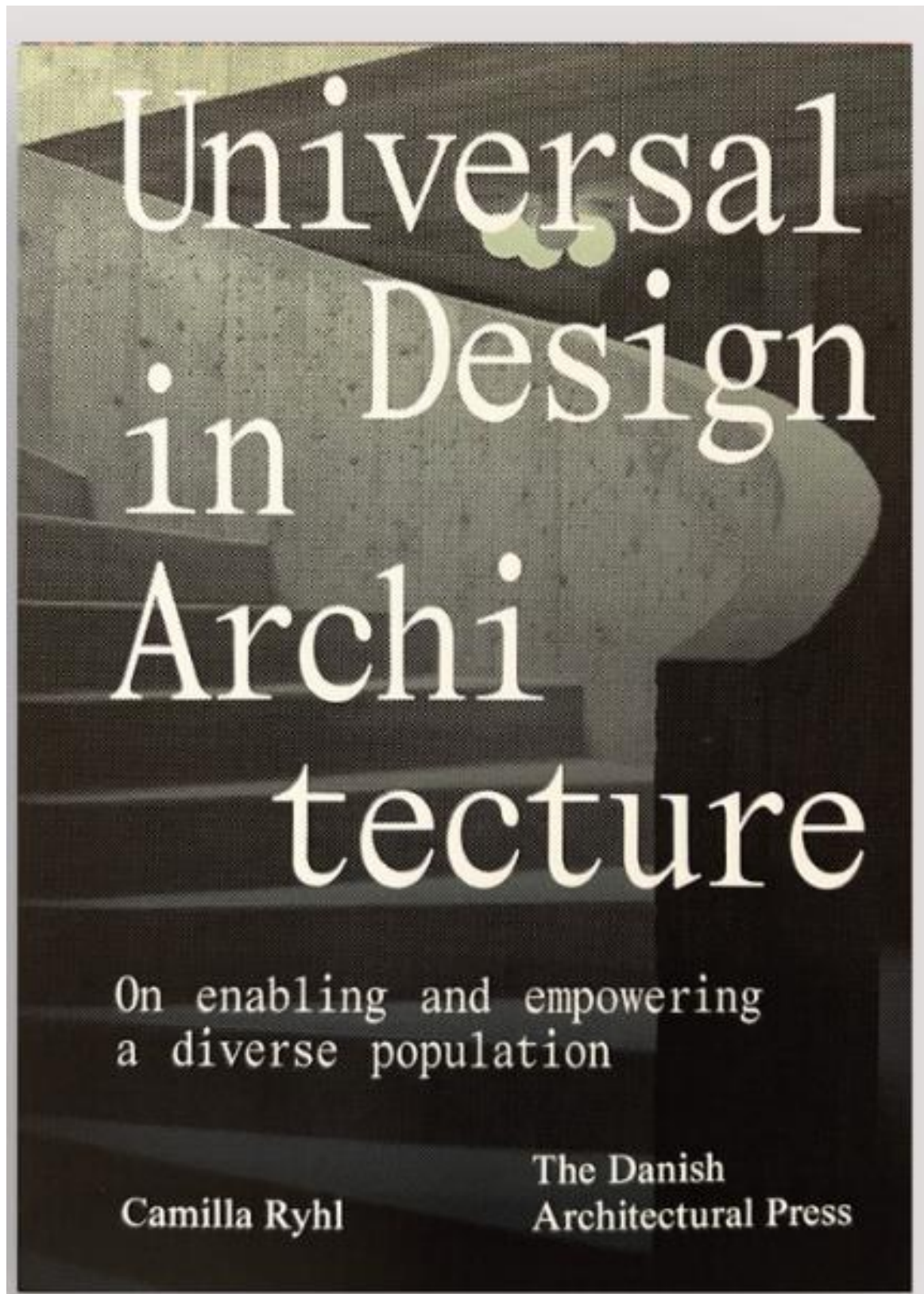
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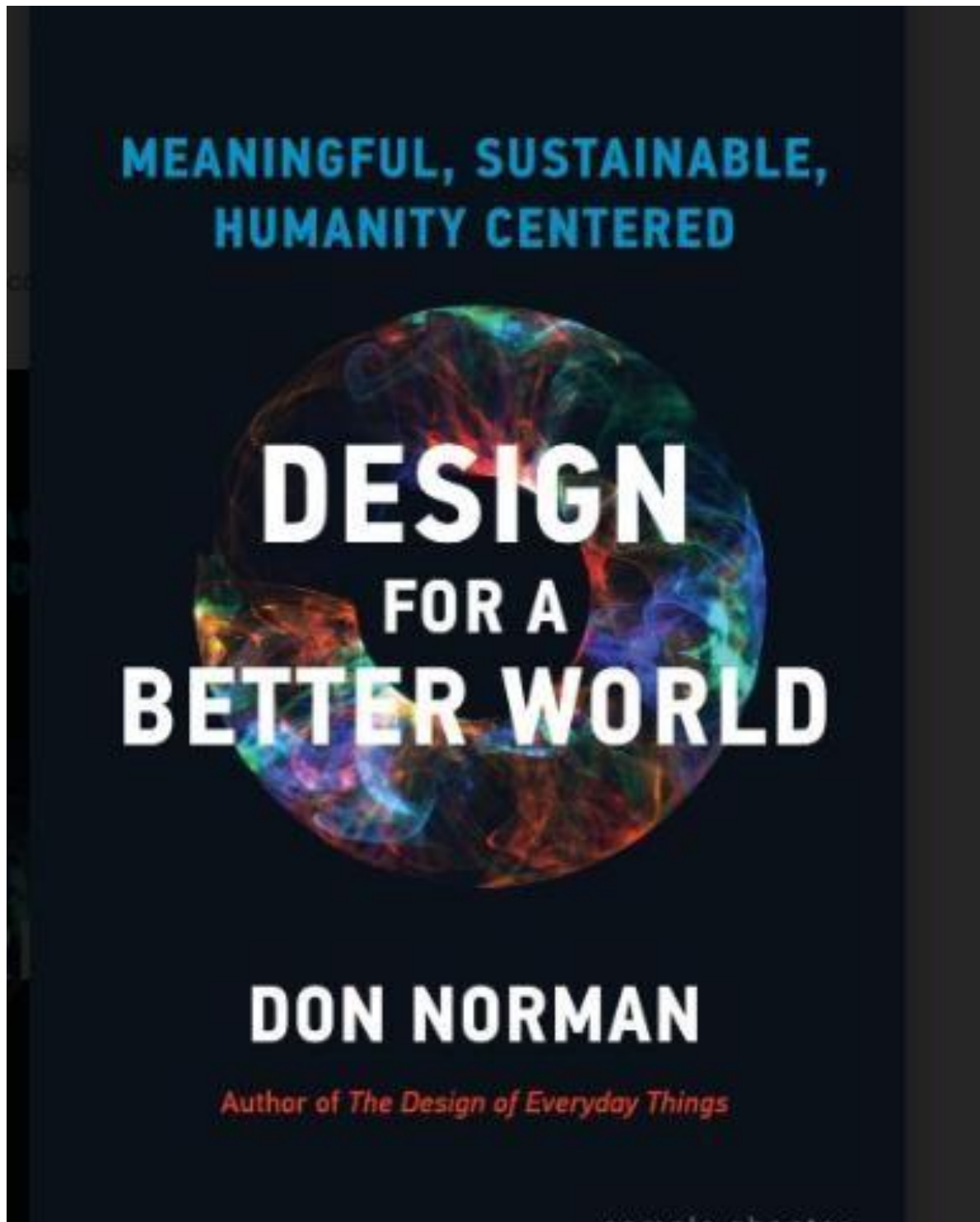
Sugandh(at)iitb.ac.in



“Move Mumbai” is an incredulous yet everyday traffic story from the streets of Mumbai captured through a series of photographs. We closely observe how Mumbaikars use their vehicles, and live with and around them. From cab drivers to bus passengers, from goods carriers to bikers, to children, and pedestrians, Mumbaikars encounter hundreds of vehicles daily while commuting between any two places whether they may or may not be in one themselves. While a two-wheeler motorbike is designed to carry two people, Mumbaikars still manage to fit multiple, especially younger children, in ways that a designer would typically not envision. This reflects in certain ways the economic constraints faced by many Indian families, the cultural value placed on integrated family living, and their resourcefulness. This is one of the many ways in which the city dwellers have appropriated vehicles. We hope that the readers relook at these everyday images with a new pair of eyes to understand the seemingly mundane yet incredulous images of the mobility of Mumbaikars.

Available at: [Amazon.in](https://www.amazon.in), [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), [Astitva Prakashan](https://www.astitva.com)







News

1. **“Designers must get better at uncomfortable conversations”** Shying away from difficult conversations will hold the design industry back. Rob Alderson looks at how we might start embracing discomfort.

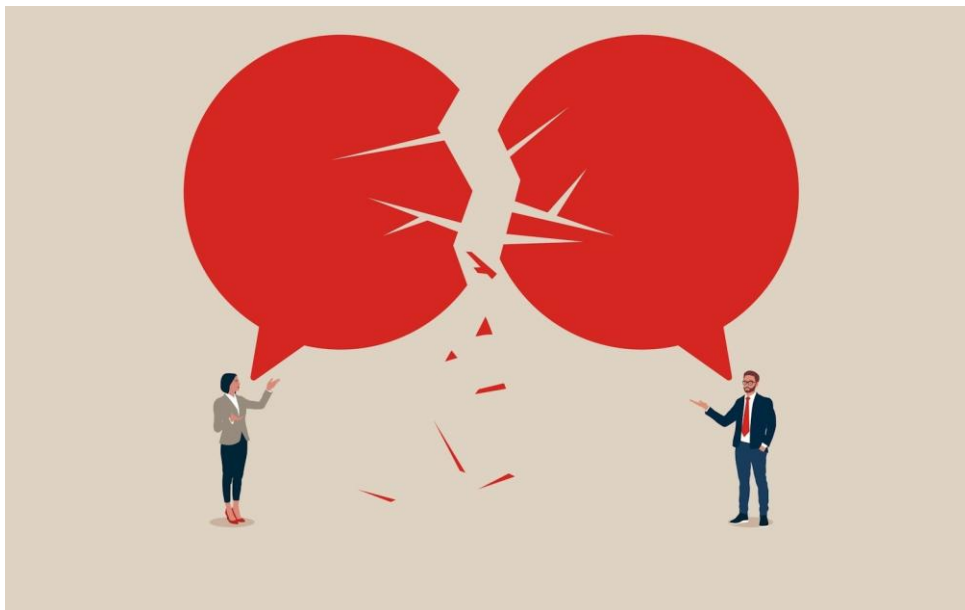


Image via Shutterstock

Have you ever had that weird experience where you come across a word, phrase, or idea, and suddenly you start seeing it everywhere?

Psychologists call this the frequency illusion. It used to be called the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon – after the terrorist group the term’s inventor first noticed this happening with – but, you know, a rebrand felt right.

As the name suggests, it’s an illusion, a mix of selective attention and confirmation bias that plays a trick on you.

But knowing it’s a trick still doesn’t lessen the impact. Sometimes, it feels like the world is trying to tell you something.

Rewind to October, and Kyle Soo’s opening remarks at the Design Council’s Design for Planet festival. Welcoming the attendees in Manchester, he encouraged us to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Complex topics like sustainability can be confronting. These discussions require hard truths and honesty about the trade-offs involved.

And, Soo believes, designers aren’t always good at handling those conversations.

“In the business world, we often don’t have space to talk about stuff that makes us very uneasy,” he said. “Just because we feel uncomfortable about something, doesn’t mean we should shy away from it. We’ve almost lost the art of having these debates.”

Once Soo put it in my brain, I started noticing this idea – of discomfort, and our struggles to sit with it – across the design industry.

Sometimes it’s lurking in the background, as with the rise of AI. If it really is going to decimate graphic design jobs – as the World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs report predicts – then the design world is in for some very tough conversations.

Too often the debate around design and AI retreats into one of two polar opposite camps – we’re-all-doomed nihilism, and fingers-in-ear denial.

Both of these are pretty problematic in their own ways. The prevalence of these two stances suggests that Kyle Soo is right in worrying that we've "lost the art" of having uncomfortable conversations.

Sometimes, our collective discomfort with discomfort is front and centre.

Asked about design's unwillingness, or inability, to diversify, Mitzi Okou of *Where Are The Black Designers?* called out the same issue as Kyle Soo.

"It's complacency that perpetuates this," she said. "People have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. And I think that no-one is comfortable with being uncomfortable."

So from sustainability, to technology, to diversity, it appears this issue with having genuinely uncomfortable conversations is holding us back.

So how can the design world start getting better at these tough discussions? A few ideas:

4. Start with curiosity

One of every good designer's superpowers is curiosity – the ability to ask good questions, to notice the unexpected, and a drive to find out more (which often means disappearing down a rabbit hole).

But sometimes when it comes to grappling with hard issues, that curiosity evaporates. People come into these conversations with a hardened set of beliefs, which easily calcify into an agenda.

It can be difficult to go from, "This is why what I think is true," to, "Is what I think true?" But that switch that changes the entire nature of these discussions.

By examining our own biases in the cold harsh light, we can start to see where assumptions and predispositions are getting in the way of honest debate.

5. Build around empathy

Another thing designers are great at is empathy – seeing things from different people’s perspectives and understanding how something might make them feel.

Yes we need to have tough conversations, but nobody needs to be a dick about it.

If we can, we need to park those uglier emotions that can arise in times of heightened tension – defensiveness, ridicule, outrage and the like.

By wondering why someone might be saying something so incredibly stupid/offensive/wrong, we can better engage with them and move the conversation beyond tit-for-tat point-scoring.

6. Ask that annoying question

Some friction is inevitable if we’re going to make progress. We have to get more comfortable with pissing people off, whether that’s your boss, your client, or your colleague.

So ask that question. Raise that concern. Draw attention to the elephant in every room, even – hell especially! – if everyone else seems to be studiously ignoring its increasingly urgent trumpeting. Off-the-record, many design leaders will yell you that they expect the next few years to be very choppy.

Given the scale, and the unprecedented nature of challenges the design world is facing, it would help to start putting more of those concerns on the record. To come together and be honest about things that are already fundamentally changing the design industry.

We can’t control some of the macro forces buffeting the design industry. But pretending everything is fine won’t hold out as a coping mechanism for much longer.

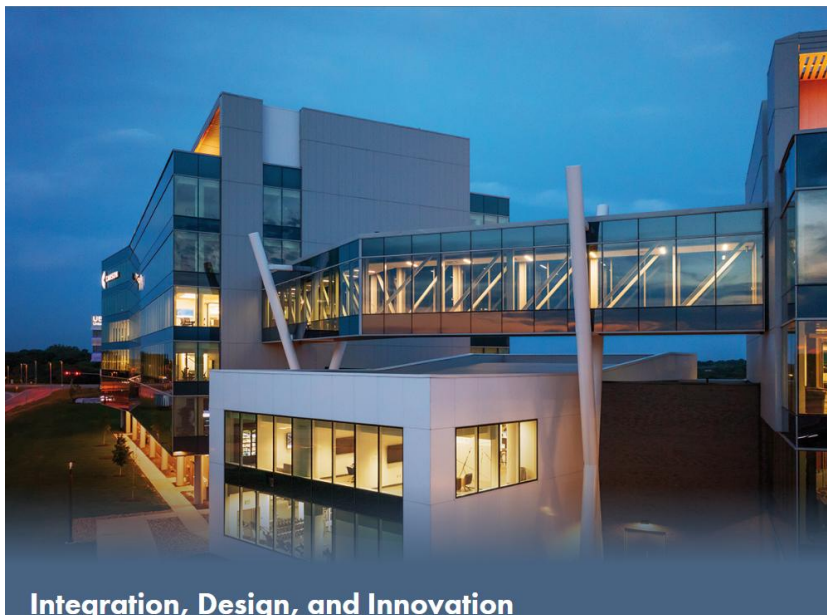
(Courtesy: Design Week)



Programme and Events



The submission deadline for the 2025 edition is September 30,



Integration, Design, and Innovation





9-11 September 2025



STUDENT SERVICE DESIGN COMPETITION!

OBJECTIVE:

The competition aims to leverage students' creativity and service design skills to address real-world challenges faced by India's social sector. Solutions must be innovative, actionable, and culturally sensitive, motivating NGOs to implement them effectively.

ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION:

Open to undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral students enrolled in academic institutions during 2025.

KEY DATES:

Registration Deadline: **Feb 15, 2025**

Submission Deadline: **Jun 15, 2025**

Announcement of finalist teams: **Aug 15, 2025**

Final Presentations: **Oct 6-8, 2025**, at the ServDes25 Conference

Announcement of Winners: **Oct 8, 2025**, at the ServDes25 Conference

serv DES '25



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