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Design for All

Designing the City TOGETHER

Guest editor

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Knight of French National Order of Merit for Culture

Former Director International Affairs Cité du design

&Ecole Supérieure d'Art et Design de Saint-Etienne

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Guest editor



Josyane FRANC

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 Knight of French National Order of Merit for Culture
 Former Director International Affairs Cité du design
 &Ecole Supérieure d'Art et Design de Saint-Etienne**

Josyane Franc has more than 35 years of experience in the field of international cultural relations, art and design project conception, management and coordination. She has co-curated exhibitions, organized conferences, participated as a jury in many competitions, managed projects, developed local and global partnerships and promoted French Design. In 2021, she was awarded Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite (Knight of the National Order of Merit), one the highest French National recognition for civilians with outstanding contributions, which honoured her career and commitment to culture.

Since 2019 Ms. Franc has been consulting as a design networks expert, involved in various European and international projects. Currently she is the mentor of a Cultural & Creative Industries innovation pilot program within the EU-funded project entitled Collab4HySustCCI (2023-2025). She was also an expert in the Creative Europe project 'Human Cities SMOTIES' that aims to

foster creativity in small and remote places (2020-2024) and was the project leader of 'Human Cities, Challenging the City scale' a program that involved 10 European partners (2014-2018). She was a member of the advisory committee of the Seoul Design Award in 2023 and the Vice-Chair of the Steering committee of the Human City Design Award organized by Seoul Design Foundation from 2019 until 2022. She was Jury member of students design competition in the Biennial Ibero-Americana /Madrid 2023 and Vidrala Master Glass design contest 2024 /Bilbao.

Josyane Franc is the former Director of international affairs for the Cité du Design and Saint-Etienne School of Art and Design (ESADSE). Since 1989 she's been promoting artists, designers and the design magazine AZIMUTS. She built a global network of sixty institutions and was part of the team that founded the Saint-Etienne International Design Biennial in 1998. She was an official representative of the Cité du Design and ESADSE within various international networks: ERASMUS, ELIA, CUMULUS, BEDA, Design for all Europe, UNESCO Creative Cities, Centre Jacques Cartier and as such coordinated their participation in numerous European and international collaborative projects. She was Chairwoman of Art Accord France (2004-2019); ELIA Board member (2006-2014); Vice chair of EIDD/Design for all Europe (2008 – 2018). She led the city of Saint-Etienne application towards the designation as UNESCO Creative City of Design and coordinated its activities since its adhesion in November 2010 at both the local and international level. She was the Chairwoman of the network of UNESCO Creative Cities of Design for 4 years and the Focal point for Saint-Etienne for 9 years, concluding as an official ambassador for those institutions.

GUEST EDITORIAL :***Josyane FRANC***

First of all I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr Sunil Bathia for inviting me as guest editor of the December 2025 issue of Design for all India and to celebrate the 20 years anniversary of the online journal dedicated to women in design research. I selected a few design research projects done by talented women designers I worked with during my career as Director of International Affairs at Cité du design and at the School of art and design Saint-Etienne in France.

For me it's also an opportunity to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Cité du design Saint-Etienne (France), a pioneering place where design has become a lever for social and economic transformation. In 2005 the Cité du design was founded by the city of Saint-Etienne and its Metropolitan government, thanks to Jacques Bonnaval, the visionary director of the School of art and design and founder of the Saint-Etienne International Design Biennial in 1998 and Michel Thiolliere, then mayor. But the first director of this new design centre was a woman designer, Elsa Francès, who placed social innovation at the heart of its mission. With exceptional collaborators such as Camille Vilain, Isabelle Verilhac, Nathalie Arnould, Marie-Haude Caraës, we have developed bold programmes to reinvent the city through design. In 2010, Saint-Etienne became the first and only french city to join the UNESCO Creative Cities of Design network, an international recognition of our people-centered approach. I was in charge of

the application and subsequently became the UNESCO focal point until 2019.

Today'surban challenges (global warming, social inequalities, urban transformation) call for holistic, collaborative and human approaches, areas in which women naturally excel. Their growing presence in these professions, even if parity is far from being achieved, enriches the quality of projects.

I would like to mention that the strength of the Cité du design team, over these past decades, has been that most of them were women activists whose creativity and commitment tried to redefine the role of design in our society and in our city.

For this issue I have invited French and International women designers to share their research and projects. Among them Roxane Andrès, Isabelle Daeron, Sara de.Gouy, Ilona Gurjanova , Costanza Matteucci, Monika Olszak, Magalie Rastello, Laetitia Wolff .

The designers featured in this issue are more than contributors. They are long-time collaborators, co-creators, and friends. Our paths crossed in Saint-Etienne for the Design Biennial, or through several European projects like Human Cities or the UNESCO Creative cities of design network, where we co-created exhibitions, workshops, conferences and urban interventions. We collectively redefined design as a force for inclusion and resilience

My passion lies in sharing experiences across borders and boundaries, demonstrating the value of CULTURE and DESIGN in rethinking the city and forging links between professionals at local and international level. These shared experiences, rooted in trust and mutual inspiration, shape the narrative of this special issue : a celebration of women who design not just for, but with communities.

Designing the city TOGETHER

Josyane FRANC

Abstract :

This article explores how collaborative and inclusive design practices, often led by women, can transform cities into more resilient, empathetic, and sustainable environments. Drawing on two decades of experience at the Cité du Design in Saint-Étienne (France) and European projects like *Human Cities* (2014–2018) and *SMOTIES* (2020–2024), the author highlights the role of women designers and researchers in fostering bottom-up initiatives, co-creation, and social innovation. Through case studies and international partnerships, the article demonstrates how design—when rooted in participatory methodologies—can address urban challenges such as inequality, depopulation, and environmental degradation. It argues for a shift from top-down urban planning to a culture of collaboration, where citizens, designers, and policy makers work together to reimagine public spaces and local identities.

Keywords :

Collaborative design, inclusive cities, social innovation, women in design, participatory urbanism, UNESCO Creative Cities, bottom-up initiatives, co-creation, living labs, rural revitalization.

Introduction

There are several design definitions and its emerging application in social and urban fields emphasizes its use as a tool for cohesion

and social transformation. The urban challenge complexity, which our societies have to face can't rely anymore on "silos" expertise of specialists but rather on an interdisciplinary and participative collaboration with design. Design is a field that uses methodologies centered on user, placing the people at the core of the ecosystem and innovation process. We developed an important number of projects at different level: design for all strategy in the public transport, design in public space, in the schools and education, in retail, in companies, in research action, in the public policies.

Saint-Etienne, a Living Lab for Inclusive Design

Saint-Étienne, a historic industrial city in France, has embraced design as a tool for urban renewal and economic growth. Initiatives like the Cité du Design (2005) and the International Design Biennial (1998) have positioned the city as a hub for experimentation. In 2010, its designation as a UNESCO City of Design accelerated its transformation, focusing on improving quality of life and fostering innovation.

The Manufacture Plaine Achille campus, home to the Cité du Design, became part of the European Network of Living Labs



Figure 1. Cité du Design

(ENoLL) in 2009, promoting co-creation with users in real-world settings. In 2012, the Cité du Design also became the national reference center for the Design for All Foundation, integrating accessibility, sustainability, and social inclusion into urban projects and spread by the Design manager position created in 2011.

Since 1998, the Saint-Étienne International Design Biennial has pioneered themes like co-living (2006) and empathy (2013), fostering dialogue between designers, citizens, and policymakers. *I co-curated with Laetitia Wolff, EmpathiCity : Making Our City Together*, an exhibition with 11 UNESCO Creative Cities of Design inviting designers to collaborate with local communities and address urban challenges like : pollution, energy consumption, and public health.



Figure 2. EmpathiCity: Making Our City Together, exhibition BIDSE 2013

These initiatives marked a turning point, shifting from expert-led projects to bottom-up, community-driven design. We used to read

books by Richard Florida and Charles Landry which explained how cities can be transformed with the help of their creative residents like artists, designers and so on. We felt that we had to work with local communities and try to make a change at the local level. We were involved as partner in several European projects such as Human Cities Reclaiming public space 2010-2012.

We decided that it was time to become the leader of european project to place people and territory at the heart of our reflection, and paves the way for a design thatdoes more than beautify the world and makes it more livable, more inclusive and more resilient

I decided to share with you 2 case studies, one is the project I led during 4 years and the other in which I was involved as expert. These large- scale projects have confirmed my definition of design as lever for transformation for people and for a better life.

These experiences gave me the opportunity to work with all the talented women designers or researchers, I have the pleasure to introduce in this special issue.

Human cities : EuropeanCooperation for Urban and Rural Transformation

“It is urgent to recreate places where man has his rightful place”, writes a worried Olivier Mongin, in “*the Urban Condition*”.

I. Human Cities _ Challenging the City Scale (2014 -2018)

Empowering citizens as co-creators of their urban environment. Questioning the scale and the co-creation of the city, **Human Cities_Challenging the City scale**, was a project co-financed by the European Union’s *Creative Europe/ Culture program*. It started in 2006 with a concept created by Pro Materia (Belgium) and led by the Cité du design Saint-Etienne between 2014-2018. It gathered 12 partners from 11 European cities: Tallinn, London, Brussels, Belgrade, Cieszyn,4 UNESCO Creative Cities of Design: Saint-Etienne, Graz, Helsinki, Bilbao, and 2 UNESCO Creative Cities of Literature: Ljubljana and Milan.



Figure 3. Investigation book

Cité du design and its European partners ran this project, to explore how inhabitants are reclaiming the city, and propose modes of (re)invention of urban life. Occupying vacant buildings to test new ways of working or learning; federating the makers community to contribute to the development of a district; activating and improving the quality of public spaces: these were some of our partners' missions. In our view, cities have become "living laboratories", in which experimentation is an indispensable tool. If done well, it provides a valuable tool to listen to the needs of citizens and respond to people's multiple identities and lifestyles. It thus helps to strengthen the socio-cultural assets of our cities. Moreover, experimentation provides people with the opportunity to be creative and helps to enhance the vitality of their cities.

Each partner developed its experiments in its respective city, organized co-creation workshops, seminars, conferences and international exhibitions. For example, in Saint-Étienne, Graz, Bilbao, Helsinki and London, worked with citizens to transform vacant or underused spaces. The sites were adopted to test new ways of working, new services for people, education systems or meeting places. In Ljubljana, Belgrade, Cieszyn, Tallinn, Brussels and Milan, our partners joined forces with citizens to contribute to the development of a neighbourhood through improving the quality of public spaces. The variety of experiments allowed us to learn from each other.



Figure 4. Final book

From the beginning, it was built as an accelerator of local scale projects and exchanges of international experts on urban issues. With Human Cities, the Cité du design created a tool to stimulate and connect these local energies and creative forces. It led to the emergence of two multidisciplinary groups:

- ***Ici-Bientôt* initiated a new dynamic in the Beaubrun neighbourhood to reactivate vacant shops and breathe new life into changing neighbourhoods.**



- Hyper matière offered mobile, evolutive, reversible and recyclable interventions to experiment the various temporalities linked to the uses that accompany the redevelopment of the Cret de Roch neighbourhood. Through collaborative artistic projects and solidarity services, it enabled inhabitants to be creativeactors of thetransformations of their district, rather than worried spectators.



Throughco-creation workshops and local experiments—such as reactivating vacant spaces in Saint-Étienne or improving public areas in Ljubljana—the project demonstrated how design can empower communities. Women played a central role in facilitating these initiatives, using creative methods to bridge diverse stakeholders.

I take this opportunity to thank some of these women for their important role in CARTON PLEIN, CAPTAIN LUDD, ICI BIENTOT, HYPERMATERIE: Fanny Herbert, Laurie Guyot, Laure Bertoni, Laura Gorre, CorentineBaudrand, AlissonPerdrix, Julie Champagne, Carole Timist, Costanza Matteucci, Elodie Vichos, Juliana Gotilla, Lola Diard, Yai Acosta Valois, MagalieRastello.



Figure 5. Human Citizens/ Le BEAU/ BIDSE Saint-Etienne 2015

This network of Human Citizens expanded even further thanks to the Cité du design's cultural action. At every occasion, we promoted the *Human Cities* project and facilitated meetings across our international networks, especially *UNESCO Creative Cities of Design*, which Saint-Etienne is member since 2010. In September 2018, we were invited by *Seoul Design Foundation* to introduce Human Cities during an exhibition and conference gathering all the *Human Cities* partners from Europe and partners of a *Human Cities Asia* network under creation thanks to Kyung Ran Choi and Eriko Esaka. Seoul Design Foundation launched the Human City design award from 2019 till 2022 and I was involved Vice chair in the advisory board.

I really appreciate the diversity of all the experiments . Each city interpreted the brief completely differently and we had a wide variety of projects. It was a real challenge for me to manage so many partners during 4 years and I was proud of the results . I

also realized that many women were involved in each european partner organizations and projects that reinforce the idea of that women have essential qualities for inclusive urban projects .

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and in european countries it created a heightened interest in rural areas. The concept of working changed a lot due to new technologies being accessed every where. It suddenly became easier to be a digital nomad worker with the benefits of living in the best residential area, with less mobility, a cheap way of living, and reconnecting people with nature in many remote places. And we opened a new chapter for human cities .

II. SMOTIES / Human Cities / Creative Works with Small and Remote Places (2020 -2024)

“SMOTIES: creative works with small and remote places” (2020-2024), led by Politecnico di Milano, Italy, addressed the decline of small and remote European areas by leveraging design to revitalize public spaces and local culture. The project’s 10 ‘nodes of creativity’—including Saint-Étienne—used design thinking to engage residents, preserve heritage, and foster transnational exchanges, proving that marginalized territories can become hubs of innovation.

The 10 nodes of creativity (partners) include public institutions, design centres, creativeagencies, national associations, research centres located in 10 Europeancities: Milan, London, Reykjavik, Tallinn, Ljubljana, Funchal, Saint Etienne, Graz, Cieszyn, Syros. I wasinvolved as an external expert by the Cité du design team thanks to Isabelle Verilhac, Nathalie Arnould, Inge Eller and the designers working in the Dorlayvalley : Costanza Matteucci & Monika Olszak, and Isabelle Daëron.



Figure 6. Smoties meeting 2024 Estonia

SMOTIES delt with issues linked to the extended complexity of the European context: small and remote places as well as inner areas, suffer from “relational remoteness” because of their weakness of knowledge-exchange impact in terms of socio-economic, creative and political innovation. Remoteness was not necessarily bounded by the geographical location, since mobility in principle transcends

space but, rather, to the weakness of connections. Some urban settlements have experienced population decline in recent years, both physically far and close to acknowledged centres, i.e. city suburbs. Small and remote places are villages suffering depopulation, relationally remoteness although they are depositories of a material and immaterial culture at risk of being undervalued, not consolidated, not handed down, and hence lost. The output of this project aimed at creating a legacy on the places where they are based, trying to address a future development in terms of use of public spaces by linking them with cultural activities and active population.



Figure 7. Smoties final book Tallinn 2024

Conclusion

The experiences of Saint-Étienne and European projects like *Human Cities* and *SMOTIES* under score a powerful truth: when women lead collaborative and inclusive design, cities become more resilient, empathetic, and sustainable. From bustling metropolises to rural communities facing depopulation, design—rooted in participation and co-creation—offers solutions to the

pressing social, environmental, and economic challenges of our age. Women designers, researchers, and activists have been at the fore front of this transformation, bringing unique perspectives that prioritise community, empathy, and long-term impact.

Saint-Étienne, as a living laboratory for inclusive design, exemplifies this shift. The International Design Biennials, *Living Labs*, and grassroots initiatives such as *Ici-Bientôt* and *Hypermatière* placed citizens at the centre of urban renewal. Many of these projects were conceived, managed, and delivered by women, who fostered dialogue between designers, residents, and policy makers. Their leadership not only improved quality of life but also demonstrated how design can bridge gaps between top-down policies and bottom-up innovation.

Projects like *Human Cities* and *SMOTIES* further proved that women's approaches—rooted in listening, adaptability, and care—are critical to revitalising marginalised spaces. In smalltowns and remote areas, women facilitated workshops, preserved local heritage, and empowered communities to reimagine public spaces. Their work showed that creativity and collaboration can turn overlooked territories into hubs of social and cultural renewal.

At its core, this movement is about redesigning cities as shared spaces, where everyone—regardless of background—has a voice. Women's leadership in design has been instrumental in making this vision a reality, whether through mentoring, facilitation, or hands-on co-creation. As urbanisation accelerates, their contributions remind us that the future of cities is not just about infrastructure or aesthetics, but about building communities where people

thrive together. The lesson is clear : the most inclusive, resilient, and human-centred cities are those where women help shape the process. The streets, squares, and workshops where these ideas take root are the true incubators of change. Design, as a collaborative and empathetic practice, is not just a tool—it is a mindset, and women are leading the way. Each woman in those projects and this issue has played a pivotal role in my journey.



Figure 8. Cité du design International team = women activists

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Design for All India, The Cité du design and Tallinn design festival, I am reminded that our greatest achievements are not just the objects or spaces we create, but the relationships we build and the communities we empower along the way .

This is an invitation to continue the journey creating, questioning and collaborating TOGETHER !

<https://www.citedudeesign.com/>

<https://www.citedudeesign.com/archives/fr/biennale/>

<https://dfaeurope.eu/>

https://www.citedudeesign.com/articles/961/20-10-28-50efdc0a4904_unesco_texte.pdf

www.humancities.eu

<https://humancities.eu/smoties/>



Magalie RASTELLO

Designer and design researcher

Magma design studio

Design professor at École Supérieure d'Art et de Design

Toulon Provence Méditerranée (ESADTPM)

MagalieRastello is a designer, she co-founded Magma studio in 2018. The Magma design studio creates projects that promote territories, their histories, and their resources. The objects, graphics, and spaces created question our relationship with the environment and are produced with ecological materials, sourced locally. Tailor-made projects are shaped collaboratively and produced using processes that combine traditional manufacturing techniques and digital design.

Magalie has been working as an associated design researcher for Cité du Design in Saint-Etienne for around ten years (2008-2018). She also works as a design professor at École Supérieure d'Art et de Design Toulon Provence Méditerranée (ESADTPM), where she teaches design with a territorial approach, in relation with local resources.

<https://www.magmastudio.co/>

Maillages/*Meshes* - A survey on emerging convivial design in a human scale city

Magalie Rastello

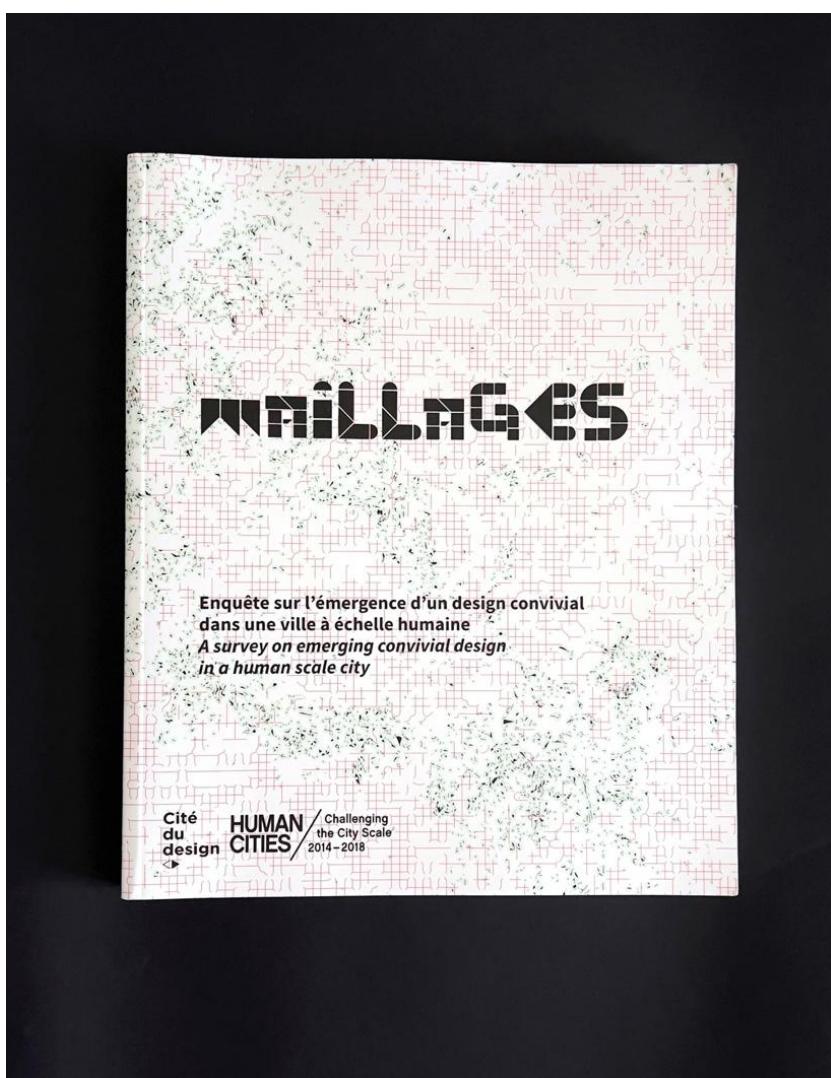
Abstract:

Maillages is an investigation into the emergence of convivial design in a human-scale city, conducted by Magalie Rastello. Through a study of local and collaborative initiatives in Saint-Étienne, this work explores how residents, collectives, and community actors transform their daily environment through innovative and participatory practices. The survey reveals how these often informal dynamics create connections among local stakeholders and redefine the city in an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient way. Design is envisioned here as a hybrid and collaborative process, capable of enhancing urban conviviality and empowering citizens.

Keywords:

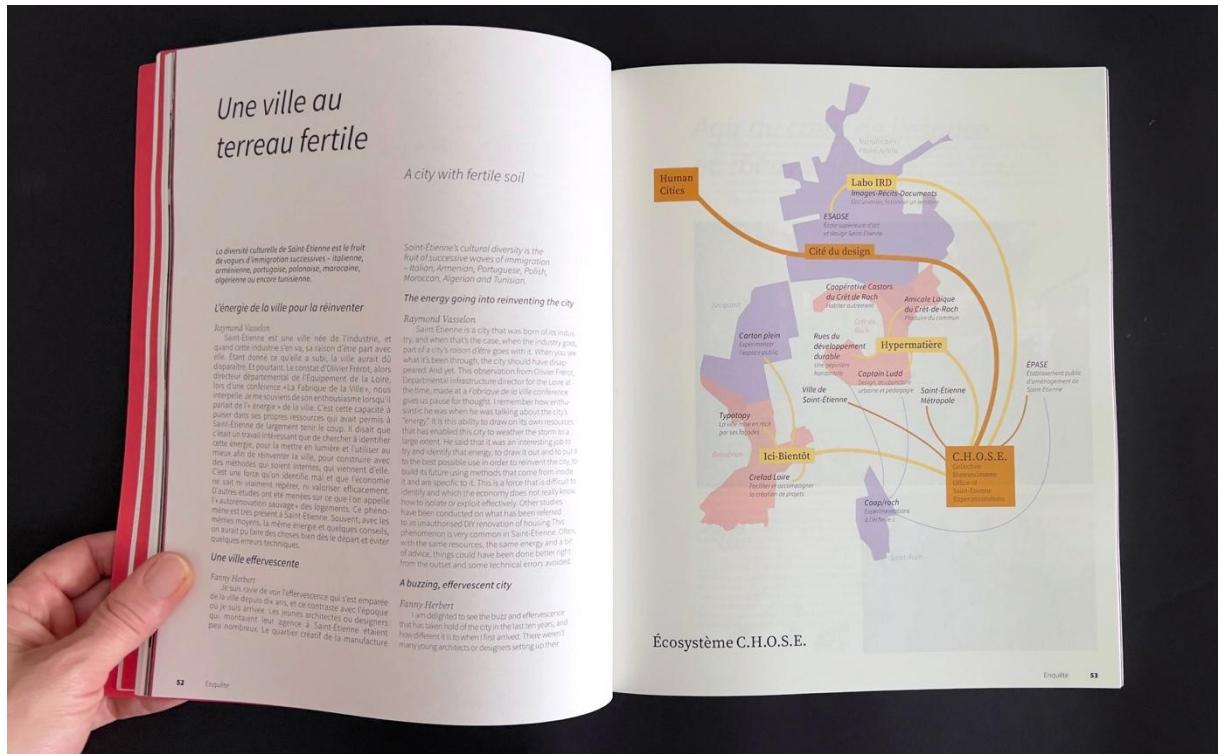
Participatory design, convivial design, social design , social innovation, urban survey, co-design, collaborative processes, territorial ecosystem, human-scale city, resilience, sustainability, ecology , local ressources , empowerment, inclusion

Maillages / Meshes consists of a review of experiences and experiments. It is a survey made by the designer Magalie Rastello who interviewed the collectives that were active in Saint-Étienne during the Human Cities_Challenging the city scale project. Her work is completed by structuring commentaries by the heads of the programme at the Cité du Design (Josyane Franc, Camille Vilain, Olivier Peyricot and Nathalie Arnould), all of which has been editorialized by Victoria Calligaro, with the unwavering support of the associations and collectives and, finally, some reflective contributions from Raymond Vasselon.



A city is an entity in perpetual movement that is permanently evolving. Whether these transformations are minute, gigantic, discrete, ostentatious, brutal or progressive, their implementation involves several scales of organization and different processes. Big events can sometimes radically change the face of a city for a few days, but the deeper changes are often those that set in over the time it takes to carry out urban development and major renovation projects. Cities are also subject to other types of changes, whose timescales vary, and which are initiatives of inhabitants and voluntary sector actors who wish to act on their everyday environment.

Often on the very edge of the established frameworks and rules that govern them, the actors in these adventures are breaking new ground. They are exploring new fields, reinventing “modes of doing”, reconsidering the practices of their ecosystem and their own practices, even in their professions. As they do this, innovative schemes arise out of civil society in a diffuse, nebulous and organic way, on the fine mesh of the local territory. New forms of organization are created, new frameworks of action produced. Starting from an impetus given by a group of inhabitants or a structure in the voluntary sector, the projects involve two types of participants: volunteers and professionals. They each contribute in their own way: the association seeks public or private funding; the inhabitants give their time or their specific skills.



During the European program Human Cities_Challenging the City Scale, the Cité du design, lead partner, has chosen to put the spotlight on different projects undertaken by the inhabitants of its own city. As the Human Cities_ Challenging the City Scale program has sought to show throughout its course, the stakeholders grappling with the challenge of the urban transformations give their projects a strong political and experimental dimension. Human Cities program, at its final phase, was no longer questioning the effects of scale leading to interactions between the actors, but a form that was gradually revealed as the survey progressed: the mesh.

This perspective opens up a space for possibilities that gives structure to the actors' feelings of connections between them, linking to their multiple realities. The effective life of a city is made up of meshes and binders, tenuously linking the entire

territory in one and the same net, which encompasses everything in a single living environment, including the institutions, the official producers of the urban, but also residents, their imaginations, their actions, human and non-human.

As the Human Cities European program came to its end, we can say that the focus on one city – Saint-Etienne – and the local actions that we know so well has enabled us to get our feet back on the ground. *Maillages (Meshes)* proposes to draw out of the Saint-Étienne situation an exemplary structuring of citizens' initiatives, which, over the last decade, have given the city a remarkable identity: the medium- sized city claimed as a space on the right scale, ideal to produce resilience, a city on a human scale.



Beyond the visible forms, the artefacts and the development of spaces, the urban initiatives and changes we refer to in this book

are thus completely integrated into a dynamic of social innovation through design in a territory. The approach to design is essentially a hybrid one and design itself seeps into urban practices often without being identified. It is the observation of the rich variety of actions and the diversity of the areas addressed that enables us to assert the existence of a form of convivial design in the territory.

<https://humancities.eu/story/publication-maillages/>

Conclusion

Design as a Lever for Conviviality and Territorial Empowerment for over a decade, I explored the intersections between design, citizen participation, and social innovation. My approach—both investigative and creative—reveals how local initiatives, often marginalized or informal, can become driving forces in rethinking the city on a humanscale. Through projects like *Maillages*, and my role in **Hypermatieres** during **Human Cities_Challenging the city scale but in many other projects**, I try to demonstrate that design is not merely an aesthetic or functional discipline but a collaborative process capable of weaving connections between diverse actors—residents, associations, institutions—and transforming urban dynamics from within.

My work embodies a vision of design as a catalyst for conviviality: it is not just about creating objects or spaces but fostering conditions for communities to reclaim their environments, develop shared knowledge, and build collective narratives. In this way, my practice of design is committed, experimental, and deeply rooted in territorial realities.



Costanza MATTEUCCI and Monika OLSZAK

The authors are designers working with graphic and object design, applied to action research and creations for space and service design, mainly in the social-cultural field for local authorities, municipalities and cultural entities, such as museums and libraries. They are co-founders of ATELIER BRUITS

Sustainable Mobility in the Dorlay Valley

Costanza Matteucci and Monika Olszak

Abstract :

"Sustainable Mobility in the Dorlay Valley" is a project that originated from a request by a group of residents. Organized as an association, they explored how to encourage their community to develop mobility solutions adapted to their needs, attentive to different ages and social situations, and that take into account the structure of their territory : an isolated rural valley. This project was selected by the Cité du Design as an experimental program for design in rural areas, within the EuropeanSmoties project.

Two designers will work in proximity to the residents for a year, using only sustainable modes of transport (cycling, walking, public transport, and hitchhiking) to test the constraints faced by the community. Those months will be used to conceive graphic and design tools that will help the project initiators move forward. The experience will prove to be more complex and enriching than anticipated.

Keywords :

Mobility, co-design, designer's role, collaboration, public space

Sustainable Mobility in the Dorlay Valley

Located in central France, the project area is the Dorlay agricultural valley, where the textile industry flourished until the mid-20th century. Like every where in Europe, the industry suffered an economic crisis, and only a few companies are still on activity, possessing valuable technical know-hows, while the villages have become commuter towns. Stretching for about fifteen kilometers, the valley, nestled in low mountains, stand on the border between urban and rural worlds, both close to and far from the major cities of Lyon and Saint-Étienne. Even though distances are relatively short and habitants owncars, many residents—especially the elderly and young people—experience isolation as services and shops are difficult to access. Although many public transport options, such as trains and buses, exist on the Saint-Étienne/Lyon route, residents are forced, from the entrance of the valley at Grand-Croix, to find alternative solutions for getting around.

4,000 cars aday cross the valley, but no buses are available for workers or occasional business travelers. The same issue arises on weekends and holidays, when cultural and artisanal activities could better flourish and leverage sustainable tourism with a different approach to transport.

We arrive in a community already grappling with mobility that has launched a series of data-gathering initiatives and begun his reflection throughout research on data and statistics. They have assessed the needs of their residents through questionnaires ;they have analyzed road traffic figures by researching official

documents; and they have set goals: to engage more and more people in actively transforming mobility and to implement actions that will gradually enable a systemic shift in mobility within their region.

IMMERSION AND SURVEYING



Walking, biking, discovering the valley by all means and weather

We begin by exploring the area, hiking with them but also on our own, with the constraint of using only transports available to those without a personal car: on foot, by bicycle, by public transport, and by hitchhiking. A previously unknown valley unfolds beneath our feet. We feel the fatigue of the slopes, the time it takes to walk each kilometer, the power of the weather, the inconveniences of car traffic, the unpredictability of public transport and the beauty of the landscapes.

WORKSHOPS AND EXCHANGES

We continued our meetings with map drawing workshops, which gave us the opportunity to ask participants about their usual routes. We discovered that a path is not a static item, but rather that the choice of a road is influenced by many factors: the activities planned at the end, whether one is alone or in a group, age, time of day, season, weather, and more. The idea of creating a sensitive map where residents could describe and suggest different routes began to take shape. The designers' outside perspective, their questions, and their requests for explanations allowed participants to appreciate the richness of experience contained in seemingly insignificant actions, how everyday life holds surprises, and the value of sharing and making information available.



Working with different tools, from maps to diagrams, to build knowledge and awareness on how each participant can contribute to the project

Continuing the immersion and exchange phase, we conceive and test decision-making tools to facilitate a series of workshops that encourage discussion and allow for future foreseen. Together,

weclarify the participants' needs, strengths and desires for the project in itscurrent state and in the long term: to become visible and recognizable in order to expand their community and thus strengthen and multiply their actions.

During these sessions, the designers discover how their approach, as well as their external perspective on the project, can play a clarifying role in understanding intentions and highlighting broader connections that they can help to uncover.

A side effect of the designer's presence is that they reinforce the group's confidence in their abilities, highlighting the importance of what has already been accomplished: the organization of collective purchases during lockdown which are gradually transforming into a permanent CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program; a car-sharing WhatsApp group; a phone number for volunteers for a volunteer taxi service used to accompany elderly people to medical appointments or shopping outside the valley.

The designers act as a sounding board, first internally, then externally.

HIGHLIGHTING THE NETWORKS

Throughout our research and encounters, we realized that various actors with specific roles are already structured in the valley or near regionoften acting separately with parallel road maps: numerous initiatives that contribute to building community already exist, ambitious projects that can connect the valley to

neighboring areas and open it up, all of which have mobility needs, particularly for cultural, professional, and heritage events.

Indeed, the issue of mobility—beyond affecting workers or young students traveling outside the valley, or populations such as the elderly, isolated individuals, or very young people who rely on cars for daily travel within the valley—regularly arises during public events that are expected to attract significant numbers of visitors, especially on weekends.

The visitors have no other option than to arrive by private car, which, in a temporary surge, clogs the narrow roads and the few available parking spaces.

MAKE THE MOST OF EXISTING RESOURCES

We have selected three events in the coming months where we can experiment tools that will allow the group to continue its research, to become visible and identifiable within its community, and to test solutions applied to real-world situations.

For TRESSE ALORS (a two-day event at the Maison des Tresses et Lacets museum-workshop, aimed at professionals and the general public, featuring conferences, an exhibition, and informal, festive gatherings), the group, recognizable by their t-shirts printed with the mobility logo, will install visible signage inviting visitors to share their travel habits, both within and outside the valley, using a questionnaire and a map.



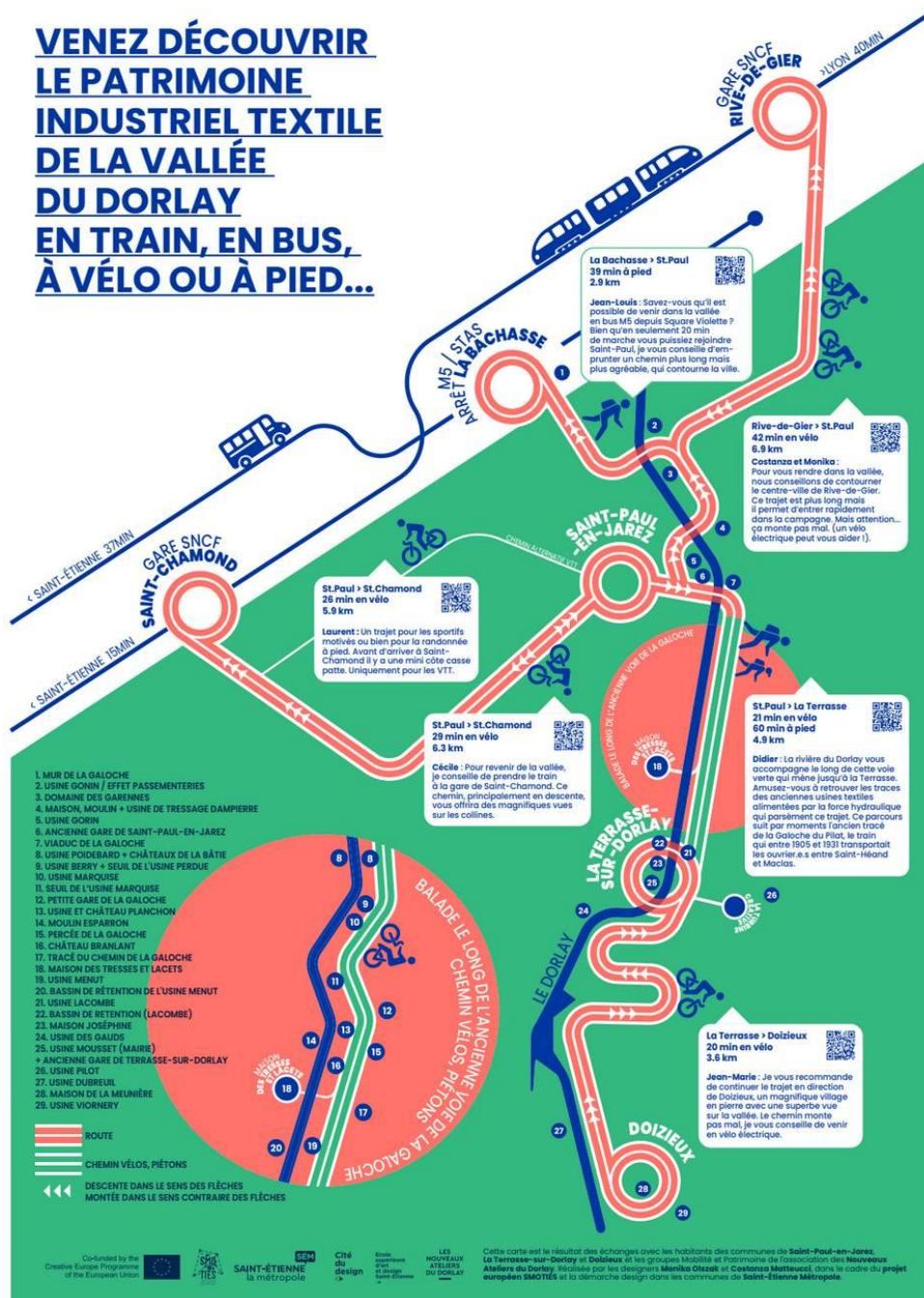
Sign design on t-shirts and totem.

The 19th century machine who has braided the transport shoelaces

The conversation begins with a "mobilityshoelaces" offered to visitors : a utilitarian object crafted on the machines at the Maison des Tresses et Lacets.

Once deciphered, the laces reveal to be a data design tool:using varying amounts of colored thread, they illustrate the transportation habits of rural residents regarding their commutes to work or vacations.

**VENEZ DÉCOUVRIR
LE PATRIMOINE
INDUSTRIEL TEXTILE
DE LA VALLÉE
DU DORLAY
EN TRAIN, EN BUS,
À VÉLO OU À PIED...**



For the **RESIDENCY OUTING** of the Fine Arts and Design school at the « **Turbine créative** » (a laboratory dedicated to textile located in one of the villages in the valley) we imagine a map focusing on the spots where art creations are exhibited, indoors or outdoors, and the group encourages and accompanies walking tests proposing alternative paths to those arriving by bike from the train stations located 14km away (and 440m of elevation change)



Visitors using the plan to wander and get informations

For JOURNÉES DU PATRIMOINE (« Heritage Days », an annual national event where cultural sites are open to the public free of charge and offer activities to visitors), the group is partnering with Saint-Étienne Métropole to coordinate a test of electric bikes disposal at the train station.



Moving ans statics signals

In parallel, the designers propose a few items to pursue previous experiences : official t-shirts are being produced for group members, the sensitive map is being finalized, and temporary signage is being installed to facilitate guide dwalking tours throughout the industrial architectural heritage and to accompany cyclists from the train station.

This signage will remain in place for a month to allow for the testing of permanent heritage signage that the « Nouveaux Ateliers du Dorlay » plan to install in the coming years. A celebratory event is being organized in the Terrasse village main square to bring participants together, mark the end of the project, and plan future activities by questionnaire to encourage discussion about mobility and alternative travel experiences.



ikers and pedestrian visitors.



Exchanging and informing tools.

MATERIAL AND CONCEPTUAL TOOLS

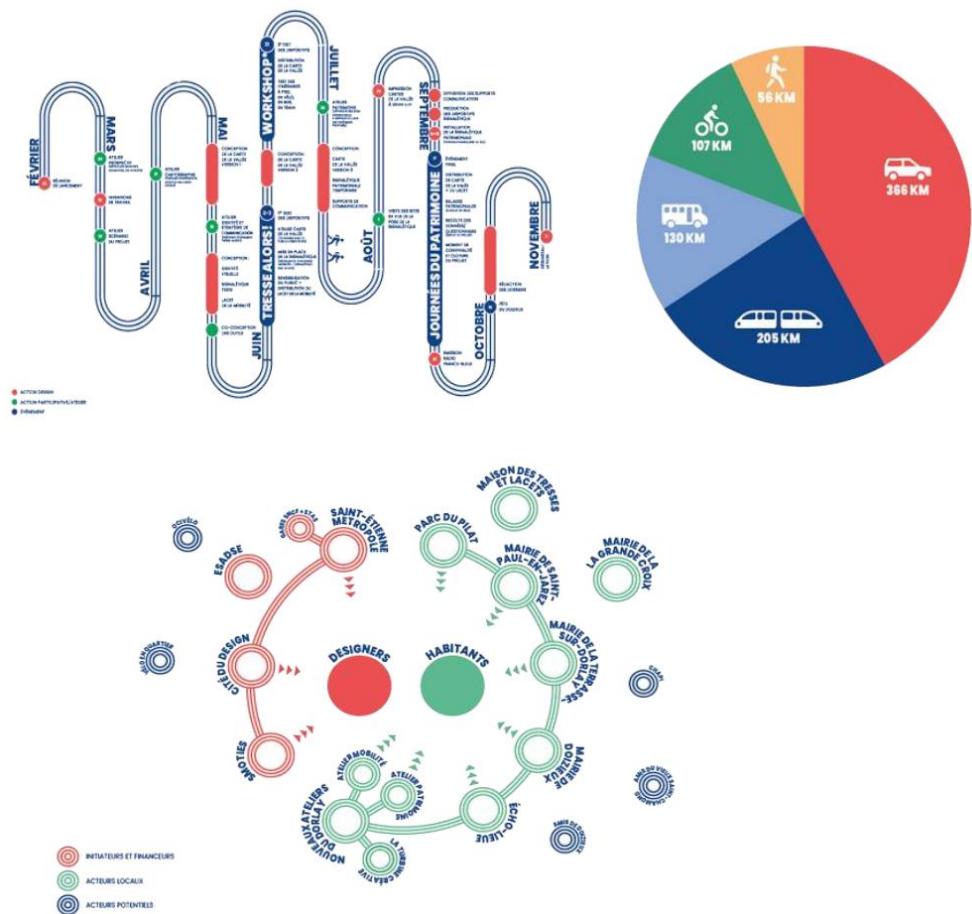
The map will gradually become the central element of the project, the common line of the experiment that links the events together : its common base has been modified each time to focus the view, zoom in on a part of the valley, and add supplementary information.

Each stage of the project, dedicated to a different event, allowed us to design adapted elements, to advance and refine our thinking, and to review and supplement the tools to adapt them for the next stage.

This gradual approach also allowed us to understand the limits of the local resources, the residents' needs for connection or, conversely, for freedom of action, and how subtle and gradual interventions, involving personal relationships, listening, and the sharing of skills and know-how, are more likely to take root than an externally injected intervention.

Action research and an adaptive project format proved to be the most suitable approaches for this specific design project, which involved a complex network and incorporated a pre-existing reality with which we gradually became familiar. From the outset, our aim was to be useful to the group and the local area, providing the means to continue their analysis and encouraging action.

The project's extended duration also allowed us to take the time to analyze our intervention with hindsight and to reflect on our role as designers, which we can explain and communicate through diagrams and graphs.



Diagramsshowing the overall actions, kilometers and the stakeholders network

Conclusion

The project proved to be, on the one hand, an exploration of the wide range of responses a designer can implement to meet a demand, as well as a showcase for another, less explicit and readily grasped role of the designer-researcher: that of becoming a revealer of needs, a link between the community and local authorities, and a highlighter of a perspective that encompasses a territory and sensibilities broader than those of the given framework.



An overall vision on all the actions initiated along with the project

PARTNERS: *Saint-Etienne Métropole, Cité du design (SMOTIES), ESADSE, Pilat Regional Natural Park, Saint-Paul-en-Jarez Town Hall, Doizieux Town Hall, La Terrasse-sur-Dorlay Town Hall, La*

Grande-Croix Town Hall, Radio France Bleu, ASSOCIATIONS: Nouveaux Ateliers du Dorlay (mobility and heritage workshops), Maison des tresses et des dentelles (House of Braids and Laces), informal residents' group, Creative Turbine (fablab), Écho-lieu (meeting place), production of equipment: Gran Lux (risograph printing), Pacoret (digital printing), Chronoflock (t-shirt printing).



Laetitia WOLFF

Design creative stategist, curator and author

Design impact strategy + innovation consultant

**Professor at BESIGN, The Sustainable Design School /
the Be-lab and at Sciences-Po Paris, the Institute of
Political Sciences.**

Laetitia Wolff is a design creative strategist, curator, and author, self-described as a cultural engineer. Her work focuses on creating projects that generate new discourses, practices, and experiences around sustainable design as a tool for change and positive social impact.

In late 2018, she relocated in the south of France where she grew up, after more than 20 years spent in New York. She currently works as a design impact strategy + innovation consultant to guide organizations and municipal governments in ecological transition.

She recently created The Be-Lab, an experimental action-research space within BESIGN, The Sustainable Design School, to focus on the value of design research for regeneration.

She teaches user-research and community-based seminars, and lead partnership courses at BESIGN School, as well as impact strategy seminars at her alma mater, Sciences-Po Paris, the Institute of Political Sciences.

While heading the strategic initiatives at AIGA in New York (2013-2018) the professional association for design, she helped build the organization's civic engagement via webcasts, exhibits, task forces, new work methods, and special projects. She directed several social innovation, community-centered and creative placemaking projects, including Design/Relief, and Identity Design Action: East New York to name a few.

From 2011-2013 she headed the nonprofit startup desigNYC as its first executive director, matching hundreds of nonprofits to design services, following her 2010 launch of expoTENTial, an urban intervention platform that investigated design's strategies to address pressing environmental issues in the city.

For the Saint-Etienne International Design Biennale, an institution she's been collaborating with for the past 20 years, she has co-

curated a number of large exhibitions including “EmpathiCITY, Making our City Together” with the UNESCO Creative Cities network, as well as produced and moderated a number of international conferences and workshops – the last one in 2022 was “Fix, Flux+ Flow” on sustainable urban mobility.

She was the editor-in-chief of *Graphis* magazine and several Annuals (2000-2004) and *Surface* magazine (2005-2008), where she oversaw the design direction of its special projects. Wolff is the author of the award-winning monograph on French graphic design master *Massin* (Phaidon) and of the seminal *Real Photo Postcards* (Princeton Architectural Press) on vernacular photography.

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The Ricochet Project

Cleanliness in the city of Nice

A design case study

Laetitia Wolff

A partnership project developed at Besign, The Sustainable Design School, in partnership with Métropole de Nice, France

ABSTRACT

Challenge

Sadly, it's a universal and global waste management challenge: 1 million cigarette butts a day - by far the most common waste found on the ground in the city of Nice - regardless of the type of public spaces studied.

The question we asked ourselves was: How might we as designers encourage smokers to respect implicit rules of cleanliness of the city of Nice.

Solution

The Ricochet project, developed in partnership with the city of Nice, consists of a set of three complementary solutions: a revised, improved trash can, a new trash-totem, and an original signage/communications campaign. Based on in-depth research in behavioral design, the solution attempts to respond to smokers' complex relation to public space, level of addiction, and overall urban context.

Impact

This partnership project not only opened the city of Nice sanitation department and elected officials to design methods, it also resulted in the hiring of a student intern who continued her master thesis on the very topic. The city of Nice has filed a patent to protect the Trash-totem design; their contracted manufacturer is currently developing a prototype of the revised trash can solution, and started to test it in pilot locations.

Keywords :

#waste management #sustainable cities #cleanliness #sanitation #behavioral design #sustainable innovation #social innovation #public space #human-centered design #user research #civic design #incivilities

This design case study, written a year after the project was presented to partners, was written by Laetitia Wolff, as the partnership coach (Semester 1, Winter-Spring 2021-2022) and Design Impact instructor. It also quotes part of the report prepared, originally in French for the city of Nice, by project partner Philippe Courpron of EuroConsulting. An illustrated version of this document was designed by Holly Bartley, alumni of Besign School under Laetitia Wolff's art direction, and downloadable at wwwthebelab.org.

Special thanks to Maurille Larivière, Director of Besign, The Sustainable Design SchoolGrant Lindscott, then Director of pedagogy, Besign, The Sustainable Design School ; Saurabh Bedarkar, Lab manager, Besign, The Sustainable Design School;

Claire Denizart, Marianne Giraudon, Tom Macquard, 5th year students; Laurent Calatayud, then Directeur de la Propreté, Ville de NiceMathieu Vierne, Chef de service Ressources et Prévention de la Direction de la Propreté, now director of the Propreté service; Pierre-Paul Léonelli, elected official at the city of Nice and at Région Sud; Christophe Junac, Directeur de l’Innovation et de la Ville Intelligente, Ville de Nice; Christian Gasquez, Directeur développement des nouveaux usages, Ville de Nice; Pierre-Paul Léonelli, elected official at the city of Nice and at Région Sud; Claudia Montero et Philippe Courpron, Eurogroup Consulting; Isabelle Demangeon, UGAP.

NB: *Design for Social Innovation, Case Studies from Around the World*, a book edited by Mariana Amatullo, Bryan Boyer, Jennifer May, Andrew Shea (Routledge, 2022) who are respected colleagues of the professor and case study writer Laetitia Wolff was a major inspiration to structure the writing of this case study.

La vie d'une cigarette

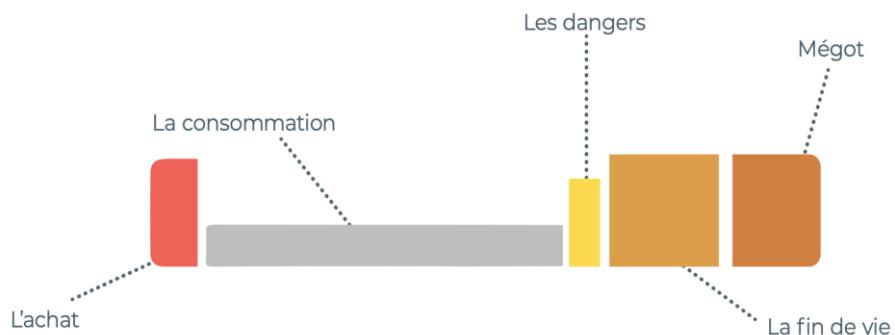


Figure 1: Besign student illustration showing the long and complex life of cigarette butt waste

I / INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Title : Ricochet, cleanliness in the city of Nice, France 2021-2022

Project timeline

- **Understanding of the perimeter, challenges and related difficulties (13 oct. 2021 – 18 nov. 2021)**
- **Elaboration of 3 scenarios of possible solutions (19 nov. 2021 – 14 jan. 2022)**
- **Design of the selected solution (17 jan. 2022 - 9 feb 2022)**
- **Students present final restitution to partners on Feb 10, 2022**
- **Claire Denizart's internship, summer 2022 at the Service Propreté Ville de Nice, under the supervision of Laurent Calatayud**
- **Claire Denizart's Diploma project developed around the issue of waste sorting selection and the role of garbage collectors, in collaboration with Ville de Nice Service Propreté (Sept. 2022- April 2023)**
- **First prototypes of revised garbage cans built by manufacturer Sineu-Graf and installed in Nice - Winter 2023-24**

Design team: Besign School Students: Claire Denizart, Marianne Giraudon, Holly Bartley, Tom Maquard, Arpine Saakian, Justine Biasi, Emma Weber, Romain Desrez, Marine Dhalluin, Ombeline Gonin, Henri Borde, Samantha Bufnoir, Elizabeth Nazarova, Leonor Cassini, Ines Vanhoenacker.

Led by Laetitia Wolff, professor/coach and design impact +strategy consultant

Partner project challenge : « How might we encourage users to respect the cleanliness of the city of Nice ? »

II / DESIGN CHALLENGE & NEED ASSESSMENT

Statistics provided by the City of Nice's Sanitation department show that cigarette butts are by far the most common waste found on the ground, 1 million a day regardless of the type of public spaces studied (residential hills above Nice, middle-class neighborhoods, social housing projects, or tourist areas, etc.). Cigarette butts have several complex characteristics:

- **very polluting (plastic, toxic substances),**
- **small, therefore wrongly perceived as less harmful,**
- **malodorous, which entices smokers to get rid of it faster,**
- **a waste produced several times a day for regular smokers.**

Based on these statistics we revised our needs statement:

“How might we encourage smokers to respect implicit rules of the cleanliness of the city of Nice?”

III / PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The research method and community engagement strategy started with the following tasks, i.e., a mix of secondary research (data analysis, studies, behavioral design, etc) as well as primary research (mostly immersion in the field, photo reportage, observation, and shadowing of the sanitation workers in situ):

- we hierarchized the impact of different kinds of street wastes, and the various waste management tactics used to this day by the city
- we consulted quantitative stats and evidence-based data gathered over the years by the Sanitation department
- we attended immersion sessions with the Sanitation dept. professional teams, shadowing workers in trucks, by foot, including site visits of waste facilities, and training sessions held in primary school to teach about waste
- we studied “Smokers and the Management of their Cigarette Butts in Outdoor Spaces,” a key consumers[report by Opinion Way](#) published in 2019. These behavioral patterns are typically determined by three main factors: addiction, place, and context.
- we conducted qualitative sessions of in-situ observations and interviews of smokers and nonsmokers
- we studied usage of existing ashtray cum garbage cans currently available on the streets of Nice
- we researched behavioral design science and the study of smokers’ behavior

Insights from behavioral design study

Our target audience included both smokers and non-smokers who were considered, observed, studied, and interviewed. In parallel, our approach was also largely based on the observation of sanitation workers in action.



Figure2 : Visit of Besign students and teacher team at partner city of Nice sanitation department

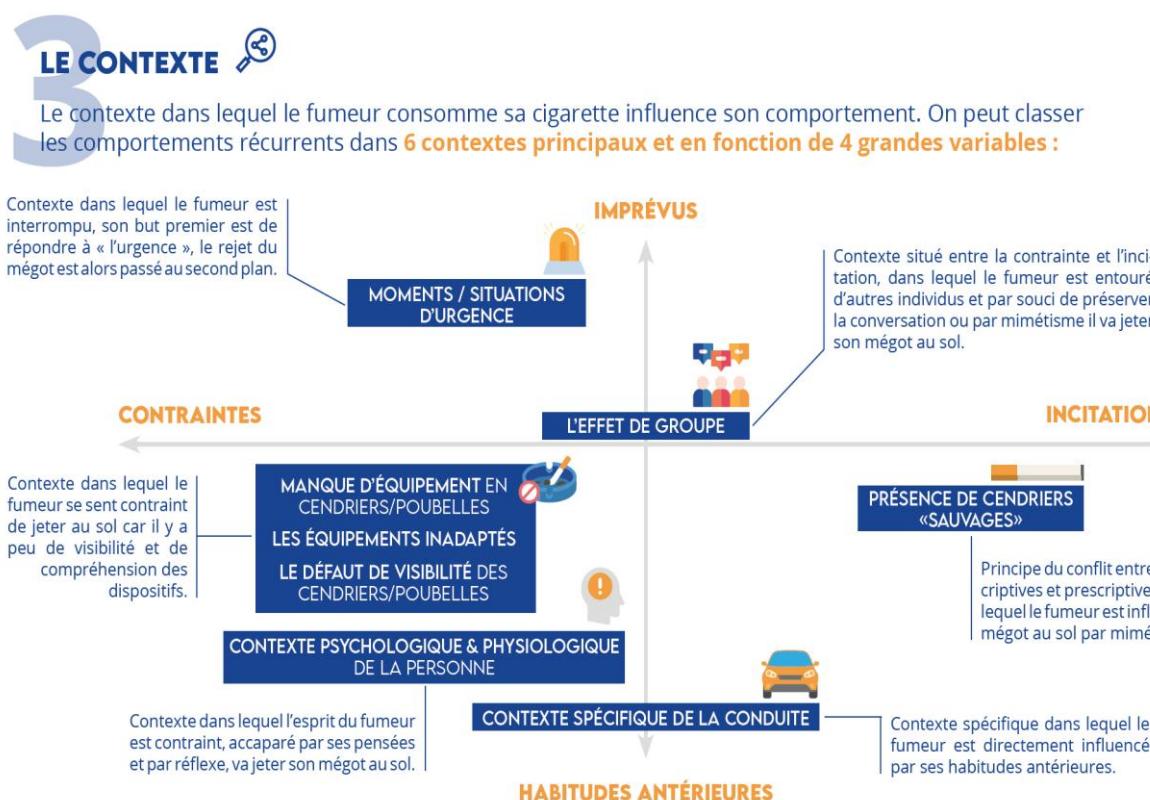


Figure3: Behavioral design analysis of the smoker in urban contexts

Goals

Students decided to orient their work in two directions :

- **Devices that allow the gathering of cigarette butts, and**
- **Ways in which to improve the information provided to smokers about these devices.**

The existing ashtray-cum-garbage proved to not be visible enough and often misused. Students focus on improving solutions by:

- designing a new device system and dedicated zones, more inviting to smokers
- redesigning the top of the existing ashtray cum garbage can
- informing smokers of the closest ashtray options available on the streets

IV / DELIVERABLES / SOLUTIONS

The design output used a diverse array of complementary design media, essentially physical (street furniture) and spatial (signage, public space communications).

The solutions proposed were purposely anchored in deep values and cultural references:



Vernacular



Playful



Evolutive



Inclusive



Pedagogical

Following the research phase, largely inspired by behavioral design practices, the Ricochet project deliverables consisted of a set of 3 complementary elements : a revised, improved trash can, a new trash-totem, and a signage/communications surface treatment.

Technical descriptions

ASHTRAY-GARBAGE CAN

The edges of the existing garbage cover and more generally the unused surfaces serve as scraping area to smokers, which thus damage them faster. To remediate this situation, it was necessary to reduce the overall size of surfaces. Secondly, smokers don't understand the object; instead of using the orifice conceived to throw cigarettes (in the actual shape of a cigarette), they think the holes in the grill (of identical diameter to a cigarette), are meant to throw butts, when they're meant to function as a scraping area. Butts are therefore abandoned on the grill, instead of being captured in a close container, and often the wind blows them away on the sidewalk.

The solution proposes to better define zones of extinction for the cigarettes to facilitate the user's global understanding of the device; it also integrates a slightly slanted grill that securely captures butts. The diameter of the garbage cover was reduced to better fit the periphery of the can cylinder. The garbage hole was also increased to receive more voluminous waste.

The ashtray space was reduced to encourage smokers to crush their cigarettes on the slanted grid, modified as an inclined funnel covered with ridges. The ridges promote the extinction of the cigarette butt. The slope automatically brings the cigarette butt into the hole. The ashtray hole in the center of the bin is large enough to throw a cigarette butt in, but relatively small to prevent other waste from being thrown in.

The signage arrow indicates in a simple and clear way the direction which must be given to the cigarette butt.

All of these visual, usage-based, and material elements help facilitate the understanding of the device and the act of throwing a cigarette butt.

This concept was designed with two different forms of grids. A grid in the shape of a cone (option n°2) and another made up of three grids of different inclinations (option n°1). These shapes optimize the collection of cigarette butts left on the grid.



Figure4 : Renderings of the new garbage cum ashtray, side view and bird's eye view and in context of the streets of Nice

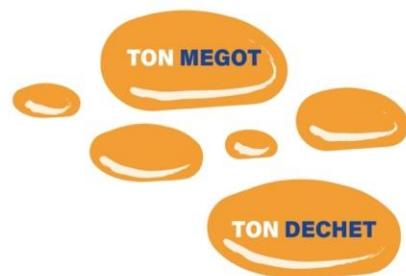
TOTEM

The second proposal aims to limit the dispersal of cigarette butts by bringing smokers together in the same place: the “smoking area.” The goal is to induce positive behavior by mimicry in smokers: if the smoking area is clean and without cigarette butts on the ground, then future smokers will be encouraged to properly dispose of their cigarette butts. The area revolves around a large ashtray in the form of a totem. It is thus visible to all.

The totem ashtray offers numerous receptacles for extinguishing cigarettes (grid), scraping butts (holes) and collecting them (funnel, container). The totem is surrounded by seats in the form of pebbles, available in several sizes and promoting the gathering of users in the smoking area, open, inclusive, and welcoming. Finally, signage on and around the totem would make the smoking area all the more visible and easier to use.



TON MEGOT
TON GESTE
TON DÉCHET
TON DÉGAT
TON DEVOIR
TON LITTORAL
TA VILLE
TA RESPONSABILITÉ



Figures5 : (left) prototype of the ashtray totem, (right) communication information on the ground

SIGNAGE CAMPAIGN

The signage system on the ground aimed to guide users towards the totem and the dedicated smoking area, supported by short and striking messages, in the form of pebbles drawn on the ground. These would respond to each other by echoing the principle of ricochet. This path makes it possible to intrigue, educate and empower smokers in the management of their waste through organic and iconic forms (the pebbles), symbolizing the waterfront and the Promenade, and thus conveying a strong vernacular identity.



Figures 6: (left) directional communication on the ground; (right) rendering of smokers zone

V / OUTCOME / IMPACT

Primary categories of impact, in order of importance (show 17 ODD)

environmental (Preservation of nature, respect life on land and water!)

social(Health&Wellness)

[x] cultural (Education, responsible consumption, sustainable cities, community engagement)

[x] economic



Figure 7: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals relevant to our project

SDG 3 Good Health and well-being: mentions that the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) "helps countries strengthen their laws or adopt new tobacco control legislation."

SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities: By 2030, target 11.6 aims to "reduce the environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management."

Also, by 2030, the target 11.7 encourages city governments to "provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces."

SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and production: By 2020, i.e. 3 years ago, the target 12.4 recommended to "achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water

and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment.”

SDG14 Life below water : 17 Million metric tons of plastic entered the ocean in 2021, and are projected to double or triple by 2040, and cigarette butts are included in this plastic content. By 2025, the goal is to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities. An indicator used is the index of plastic debris density in the ocean.

Despite a global consciousness of the problem of cigarette butt pollution, and its consideration in the highest instances, as a health hazard and taken along other forms of air/soil/water pollution, every city of the world continues to fight against the plague of cigarette butts on the ground (SDG15, Life on Land is also concerned). Nice is unfortunately no exception to the rule.

Methods of evaluation used in this project

Since 2021, the city of Nice's Sanitation department has attempted to tackle their problem of cigarette butt pollution through a technical and quantitative approach, with the characterization of waste on the ground (using national standards such as the Objective Indicators of Cleanliness), including regular counts, analysis of density and the waste's geo-localization. Encouraged by European standards of organizations they belong to, such as the Association of Cities for the Urban Cleanliness ([AVPU](#)), they've adopted a proactive and almost mathematical observation of the phenomenon.

In contrast, our approach attempted to propose a more qualitative, human-centered approach, which started from the observation of the social behavior of the smoker, the problem of addiction, our relation to public space, rather than focus on the final product of the cigarette waste itself.



Figure 8. Cité du design International team = women activists

NB: To evaluate our project impact, we decided here to reuse some of the qualitative evaluation criteria suggested in *Design for Social Innovation, Case Studies from Around the World*, a book edited by Mariana Amatullo, Bryan Boyer, Jennifer May, Andrew Shea (Routledge, 2022) who are respected colleagues of the professor and case study writer Laetitia Wolff.

QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

We gathered feedback from various stakeholders via informal debrief interviews, including technical municipal services that manage the problem of cigarette butt waste, as well as the city's innovation department. We also reached out to elected officials who were instrumental in making this partnership financing happen.

In January and February 2023, twice we interviewed Laurent Calatayud, Directeur de la Propreté Ville de Nice chez Métropole Nice Côte d'Azur,to touch base with him on the development and implementation of the project. We also spoke to Christophe Junac, Directeur de l'Innovation et de la Ville Intelligente chez Métropole Nice Côte d'Azur, who financed the partnership, as well as Christian Gasquez, Head of new usages, also at the Département Innovation et Smart City, Métropole Nice Côte d'Azur.

To evaluate our impact, we chose various criteria, applied according to the stakeholders we engaged...

Criteria 1: Adoption by the organization and/or other organizations

Design prototyping and implementation, a systemic change
The city of Nice had invited Sineu-Graf, the Alsace-based industrial manufacturer of trash can solutions and urban furniture, currently under contract with the Métropole de Nice, to the final oral presentation by students back in February 2022. They attended on their own money and appreciated the solution so much they immediately offered to build the prototypes. Since then, they've been asked by the City of Nice to create 2 prototypes of the revised trash can, based on the students' revised specs.

The Sanitation department director followed Besign school's recommendation to adopt a rapid prototyping approach to install the proposed new product on select pilot locations, identified as "trouble shooting locations," where cigarette butts have been particularly numerous (for e.g. the commercial Avenue Jean Médecin in central Nice). Once one of the 2 prototypes is validated

a small batch (approx. 50 garbage cans) will be produced and enable the city to test and quickly observe results. The challenge for the city remains, before anything else, efficacy: can a new “specialized” piece of furniture fight against a particular type of waste as ubiquitous as cigarette butts?

However, for the totem element of the Ricochet project, the city favored their traditional process, that is to further develop an RFP (Request for Proposal). Public market regulations in France impose the publication of such RFP opportunities to several companies to prevent favoritism.

The city explored relying on the expertise of a contracted designer who would oversee the entirety of Nice's public furniture. His goal is to provide a global view of all street structures, including benches, chairs, lights, garbage cans, to create coherence, art direction, and cost-effectiveness while respecting the vernacular identity of Nice.

To fully implement the new Totem solution, proposed by Besign students, the city has to follow a few more steps in the near future:

A) Given that the totem needs to be produced within the constraints of public markets, the city has to consider a cheaper material than metal (the recommended steel is too expensive these days). This input will directly influence the future Call for project specs. document (cahier descharges).

b) The city has to create a whole new public market for this new piece to exist, aside the existing trash cans contract already in place with Sineu-Graf.

c)The city has recently filed a patent for the Totem. A good sign for Besign.



Figure 9: Group photo of students and partners, at the final restitution, Feb. 2022

Criteria 2: Assessment of change to internal organizational practices

Leadership, Human resources, professional practices.

For a new product to be launched and a campaign to take root within a complex, silo-ed, bureaucratic administration such as the city of Nice, it was important for Laurent Calatayud and Mathieu Vierne to gain buy-in from various key stakeholders, including, among others :

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

For the HR department of the Sanitation department, it was an eye-opener to the power and creativity a design point of view can bring to solve complex problems that have been addressed in very traditional ways. For the city of Nice, it was an opportunity to gain

leadership on the topic of waste management, therefore activating its membership to the European consortium of clean cities (AVPU, Association des Villes pour la Propreté Urbaine) with original approaches and pioneering practices.

"As part of the study on trash cans, Besign School students came to share the daily life of sanitation workers by shadowing them in their cleaning missions. This immersion was particularly well received by the agents who felt listened to and valued. This approach is quite relevant to facilitate the adoption of the new cleanliness furniture and accessories by the agents." says Mathieu Vierne, director of resources and prevention at the Sanitation Department.

Sanitation workers can better understand the relevance of characterizing waste, the environmental challenges at play in cleaning street waste, and their role in it. The buy-in of the sanitation workers to this day remains critical especially given the fact that their profession is too often underrated. Adopting new devices and processes, using different communication tactics, is no easy task. Early this year, The Nice Department of Sanitation earned the first Grand Prix 2022 of the National Trophies awarded by the AVPU, for a video clip honoring the role played by sanitation workers. This department was then celebrated internally for its remarkable and innovative actions and strategies, making cleanliness one of the essential steps to environmental protection.

Additionally, the diploma project of Claire Denizart continues to engage the sanitation workers in a collective reflection, seeking to develop co-created solutions, not only to improve their working conditions, their understanding of their mission, but also allow them to sort the waste collected on the street in order to give it a

second life and by the same means give more meaning to their role. This last element led her to design a new street cleaning trolley, with innovative accessories. “The immersive [approach Besign students used] is currently being pursued by Claire DENIZART as part of her diploma project, which she is leading within the Sanitation Department,” Vierne noted.

A year after our project, it might still be too early to undertake such reflections on the topic of implementation and practice change. Revisiting the adoption level, and evaluating the implementation of the new solution on the ground should ideally happen again, once the new prototypes are being deployed on the streets of Nice (an operation scheduled for Winter-Spring 2023). Then an additional, more detailed evaluation can follow as an annex to this document.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

We can assume that the wide-ranging involvement and cooperation of entities – Sanitation, Innovation, and representation by elected officials as well as external partners – generated a wider conscience and appreciation of design in administrations typically not familiar with design.

The partnership with EuroConsulting Group, which was instrumental in managing this city partnership project with Besign School, encouraged a cross-agency work relation, introduced new project management skills (such as project reporting), and de-dramatized the endorsement of design as a complementary discipline to municipal strategy.

Calatayud also convinced his superiors and colleagues of the relevance of a behavioral design approach, for instance Luc Favier,

General Administration Director, in charge of public space quality. Indeed, in March 2022 he presented the student project in the presence of the heads of sanitation workers. Favier, positively impressed with such a human-centered design approach was instrumental in connecting Calatayud to the recently hired city-wide designer and celebrated the service's coordinated efforts to contribute to the region's environmental protection.

The City's innovation department was instrumental in establishing the contract with Besign, and helped identify the waste management challenge of the Sanitation department as a topic for design innovation. Other services of the city could potentially benefit from such partnership.

From a professional practice standpoint, the project allowed a shift in perception of design as a discipline that provides a valued holistic approach. "The added value of this design research centered on the analysis of needs, the in-depth understanding of behaviors and uses made it possible to outline the sociology of smokers, which is at the heart of the problem of cigarette butt pollution. The technical services of cities do not yet have the natural reflex of these approaches, nor the habit of using design. But my positive takeaway of this partnership experience with Besign School is that it demonstrated that the pollution problem could be addressed not by the usual consulting firm study, but by design!" comments Christophe JUNAC.

For the territory at large and its elected officials, such as Pierre-Paul Léonelli, Deputy Mayor of Nice, in charge of cleanliness, collection and the fight against incivilities, the complexity of the issues at play required the input of innovation practices and

sustainable design strategy rather than just technician and technological approaches.

"Starting from a seemingly mundane subject matter (i.e. cigarette butts on public roads) Design students were able to not only find heaps of ideas, show interest and even feel concerned about the subject, but also proposed a fine reflection and exhaustive analysis of the problem. In the end, they designed objects that can guide our fellow citizens in adopting more civic behaviors. Engaging this youth – so naturally conscious of the climate issues - reinforces my idea that we should submit other subjects to them to improve user behavior, and put design expertise at the service of other important public service challenges," Said Pierre-Paul LEONELLI, Deputy Mayor of Nice, Delegate for Cleanliness, Waste Management, Parks and Gardens, Vice-President of the Metropole, Regional Councilor for the Region "Le Sud.

The final public restitution held at the school in February 2022 also included influential VIP guests such as elected official Patricia Demas, the Alpes-Maritimes Senator, passionate about environmental issues and the role of students in shaping innovation.

Criteria 3: Collaborating with youth, students, in a learn by doing environment

Feedback from partners and students :

"I admit the student team did more in 6 months than we had been able to achieve in 6 years!," joked Laurent Calatayud, director of the Sanitation department of the city of Nice the day of the

students' final presentation in February 2022. A year later, when interviewed, Calatayud added : "We really needed an outsider look into our daily reality, in order to gain a different point of view on our problem."

"It was a great undertaking ! I'm always pleasantly surprised by the work of Besign students, because their training is so centered on uses and people, and not technological solutions, as we are often used to doing, " added Christian Gasquez who has collaborated with the school in recent years.

Added value of a real-world partnership for students

Most students were motivated by the opportunity to work on real-world, meaningful challenges, in their own city, and be able to be in touch with very engaged, knowledgeable, and passionate professional partners. Following her experience in this partnership project, Claire Denizart, a 4th year student designer leader in the project, was recruited to conduct her summer internship at the Sanitation department (Service de la Propreté).

Over the summer 2022, she worked closely with partners Laurent Calatayud and Matthieu Vierne, mostly on citizen engagement tactics, waste sensitization and eco behavior. Subsequently, Denizart embarked on a longer-term collaboration with the Sanitation department to focus her diploma project on waste sorting strategy and city cleanliness as her research topic and site study. She has initiated a new model of partnership-based diploma project at the school. She recently published her diploma thesis, entitled "Exponentielle," focused on the topic of waste selection, transformation and management, and is currently developing her

design diploma project on design solutions that further enables sanitation workers (due April 2023).

"Waste management is a fascinating, complex and complicated subject, for which there is no single solution. It's a systemic problem, and without sociology and the added value of behavioral design we cannot settle it," says Claire Denizart, Besign School 5th year student.

For Besign School

This partnership consolidated an existing and established relation with the City of Nice/Métropole de Nice; it diversified the services the school has collaborated with, following earlier partnerships with the departments of Police, Urbanism, Port prior to this project. It connected the school to a larger ecosystem of public service administrations, such as UGAP, a key agency that provides contracted innovation tools, contracts, and processes to local governments.

"This project is a proof of concept that design has its place to serve public service. Admittedly public services are not the easiest thing to change and a big challenge still lies in demonstrating that, contrary to popular belief, design is not an aesthetic practice, but a social practice, conveying meaning and values, which aims to solve major issue of the 21st century." says Marianne Giraudon, 5th year student at Besign.

Theory of Change summary

<p>Conditions to be changed and assumptions: cigarette butts are the most thrown away waste on the ground and unfortunately the phenomenon of incivilities has increased in Nice and elsewhere.</p>	<p>Output: a redesign of the existing trash can, plus a new typology of design system that includes a public ashtray totem and a signage/communication campaign to support it</p>
<p>Proposed interventions (activities and resources deployed): behavioral design study and demonstration of its value, drawing insights to improve consumers' existing choices; user-centered and workers observations and interviews; to nourish a design solution that would be based on a human-centered approach.</p> <p>Objectives: encourage smokers to respect rules of cleanliness of the city of Nice.</p>	<p>Outcome (changes in competences, behavior, practice): a sustainable design approach introduced in public municipal services; the realization that change should happen first by involving the workers responsible for the city's cleanliness; and new methods of sensitizing the general public.</p> <p>Desired impact (change in conditions): a test installation would allow stakeholders to measure the impact of the solution, both qualitatively in terms of behavioral patterns, and quantitatively in terms of butts counted on the ground and around the new devices deployed.</p>



Figure: garbage-cum-ashtray, and version of the totem designed by Besign student, implemented in pilot zones of the city of Nice, 2025

Conclusion

Design at the service of public innovation, societal challenges, and changing practices in municipal services is what this project demonstrates. It also shows design's ability of sense making of everyday life's complexity.

Such experiential “learn by doing” project make Besign students more aware of ways to solve seemingly intractable issues, and debunk interrelated myths such as public health, urban space management, and the protection of our land.

When using research techniques and methods such as deep listening, observation, immersion, shadowing, coupled with an understanding of behavioral science, designers are enabled to

develop empathy for the user's problem, and propose truly innovative solutions, that are grounded in a deep understanding of who and what's at stake. "This long-term project is a great example of using design to navigate the complexities of the real-world environment. Driven by applied design research together with the posture of creative confidence,' adds Grant Lindscott, director of pedagogy at Besign.

As Besign gets ready to celebrate its 10th anniversary, such partnership signals the importance to anchor itself even more within a territory that is so meaningful to its community of students, teachers and administrators, working along its local partners, be it public or private. The role the school can play in facilitating innovation by doing has only started. – Laetitia Wolff



©Pierre Malherbet. Centre Pompidou

Sara de.GOUY

Designer, Architect and Artist

● **Sara de.Gouy draws and builds with color, light, and the people she works for. Architect, spatial designer, and artist, she seizes every opportunity to create a tailor-made, shared response that makes sense within the context in which it takes place. Inventiveness, attentiveness, and curiosity are among her fundamental ingredients, as are chromatic quality, a concern for precision, and the sustainability of her proposals.**

Trained in applied arts, architectural design, and visual arts, her perspective is multifaceted. Her complementary skills allow her to approach each proposal through the lens of spatial, visual, and functional context. Whether it's an object, installation, or piece of furniture, every design is first perceived and conceived according to its scale of intervention. A bench is an object within a landscaped site, a schoolyard holds dreams and adventures, a shelter deep in the forest changes hue depending on the time of day. Sara de.Gouy enjoys measuring and working with these scales to imagine their possible interconnections.

● Highly sensitive to color, her visual language plays with the geometry of spaces, combining and connecting shapes and shades, always conceived together. In her design, elementary forms and bold colors interact to generate a vocabulary, shaping spaces through contrast or nuance. Her creations draw us into color. Her vivid palette, inspired by concrete art and kinetic rhythms, employs intense yellows and tawny oranges to create colorful cadences.

● The participatory design approach has been fundamental to Sara de.Gouy's work from the very beginning, and it informs nearly all of the projects carried out by the studio, regardless of the audience or context. Above all, she involves future users to ensure that each facility is well designed and finely attuned to its intended uses. Together, the aim is to take the time to understand, to make things visible, and to reflect collectively on the commission and the best way to respond to it.

For sixteen years, Sara de.Gouy has developed a distinctive method that has grown stronger and more refined with each project. The modes and tools of dialogue are adapted to each project context.

● She has carried out numerous public space projects, including: the playground-sculpture *Archisculptures* in Saint-Denis, the schoolyard *Draw Me a Yard (Dessine-moi une cour)* in Sorbiers, *The Talking Bench (Le Banc à Palabres)* around a tree in Saint-Étienne, and *Pecten-Maximus*, an artistic shelter on the Way of Saint James made from scallop shells. In 2025, she is designing the

exhibition *There Once Was a City (Il était une ville)* for the Children's Gallery at the Centre Pompidou.

Born in 1983, Sara de Gouy lives and works in Lyon, France.

There Once Was a City

A workshop-exhibition by Sara de.Gouy, with and for children.

Children's Gallery – Centre Pompidou, Paris

Presented from February 13 to June 30, 2025

Ages 3 and older

Abstract :

Sara de.Gouy, an architect, spatial designer, and artist, presents "*There Once Was a City*", an immersive workshop-exhibition designed for and with children at the Children's Gallery of the Centre Pompidou. This project is rooted in a co-creation process, involving 7- to 8-year-old students in collective reflection on the ideal city. Through participatory workshops, urban walks, and artistic exploration, the children imagined a city that is more joyful, poetic, and sustainable.

The exhibition, designed as a life-sized model, invites visitors to interact with playful and colorful installations : interactive pedestrian crossings, question trees, extraordinary gardens, and starry cabins. Sara de.Gouy explores the connections between architecture, design, and civic participation, placing the child at the heart of the creative process. "*There Once Was a City*" questions the role of children in urban spaces and offers a collective, creative vision of the city of tomorrow.

Keywords :

Participatory design, Child-centered architecture, Co-creation ,Art and urbanspace, Play-basedlearning, Interactive installations, Urban sustainability, Immersive exhibition



There Once was a city. Centre Pompidou Paris, Sara de.Gouy

©Laura Samoilovich

Sara de.Gouy, architect, spatial designer and artist, was invited by the Centre Pompidou to create a workshop-exhibition dedicated to children. She chose to design the exhibition through a co-creation process with children, in line with her working approach that places users at the heart of the creative process.

Indeed, Sara de.Gouy integrates an original participatory approach with the public into her design work: the artist developed her project in dialogue with students from two Year 2 classes (aged 7–8) from a Parisian primary school, who took part in a series of six workshop days in spring 2024.

In this laboratory for the future workshop-exhibition, the students observed their environment and reimagined objects and urban spaces to reflect — together with the artist — on the city of their dreams. It began with a visit to the Centre Pompidou, where the students discovered the Children's Gallery designed by Hélène Bertin, allowing them to explore the future exhibition space. This was followed by a museum visit, featuring a selection of artworks chosen by the artist, such as immersive installations and pieces from the architecture collection displayed throughout the museum's upper floors.

After an introduction to the professions of designer and architect, Sara de.Gouy organized a two-hour urban walk through the school's neighborhood. This walk enabled the collection of questions, ideas, and themes for reflection around the concept of a child's perspective on the city. From this exploration, Sara de.Gouy developed thematic workshops in which the children worked on concepts like the bus shelter, pedestrian crossing, public square, ideal cabin, city in color, orchard, wind turbines, water collectors, and more.

The children engaged in model making, collage, drawing, and even invented game rules...



There Once was a city. Workshop with children about pedestrian crossing
 ©Sara de.Gouy

There Once Was a City, a workshop-exhibition, is inspired by everything that was created and imagined during the workshops. Sara de.Gouy invites visitors to imagine and experience a city that is more joyful, more poetic, more sustainable — and adapted to children. Designed as a large-scale model, the installation plays with scale — both that of the city and that of its young visitors. Here, the apple tree is as tall as the buildings, and giant flowers surround the cabin.

When you arrive, a pedestrian crossing with new rules makes walking across the road more fun, before you are then invited to transform the buildings' façades using coloured shapes. An apple tree, an evocation of the dream of having orchards in the city, has questions on the theme of nature in the urban space written on its fruit. Families can pick them up and share them on a bench

designed for all sizes and postures, while sound pipes let you listen to the thoughts of the pupils who participated in the project.

Further along the route, there is a garden with astonishing plants, representing the city as a place of growth where you can create your own imaginary flowers and makeshift structures. In the centre of the garden, a large hut with a starry sky invites you to continue your dreaming for a while in peace and quiet and to be enveloped by the scents of nature.

In this eco-friendly city, children climb the city's rooftops to operate wind turbines and play with water lilies, insects and fish in a mirror pool fed by raindrops. The city of the future exists in harmony with living things and natural elements, such as the sun, rain and wind.

The exhibition booklet is a drawing to be completed, allowing children to imagine the city of their dreams. Displayed on a wall, it offers a glimpse into the rich imagination of children and a better understanding of their aspirations for an ideal city. Thus, in the exhibition, the child becomes an active participant in the installations and in their city. *Once Upon a City* encourages young visitors to reinvent the city and their environment in turn.



General View of the Exhibition / The Extraordinary Garden
 ©Sara de.Gouy ©Laura Samoilovich

The exhibition was designed to be itinerant, travelling to various partner museums of the Centre Pompidou, in France and abroad. The next exhibition will take place at MOCO Panacée, Contemporary Art Center of the City of Montpellier, starting on October 22, 2025.

Design : Sara de.Gouy

Product managers: Alice Maxia, Laura Samoilovitch

Centre Pompidou ParisFor more informations :

<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/fr/programme/agenda/evenement/dPJFY5y>

<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/fr/ressources/media/0ny5cpq>

<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/pompidou-plus/magazine/article/plus-belle-la-ville-avec-larchitecte-sara-degouy>



Isabelle DAËRON

Designer and design researcher

Studio Idaë Founder

Designer and design researcher, graduate of ENSCI-Les Ateliers and Esad in Reims, Isabelle Daëron imagines objects, spaces and installations based on her reflections on the environment and natural elements, which she applies to urban and landscape design.

Her drawing and storytelling practices open up the imagination and a sensitive understanding of environments and their resources.

Winner of the France Design Impact Award in 2025, the 'Mondes Nouveaux' award in 2021, the FAIRE award in 2018, and the Audi Talents award in 2015.

She founded Studio Idaë, a multidisciplinary creative agency structured around a research and educational approach to urban, environmental and societal issues related to ecological transition.

www.isabelledaeron.com

www.studioideae.com

instagram: @isabelledaeron @studioideae

Aéro-Seine

A cooling device supplied by the Seine water network in Paris

Isabelle Daëron

Abstract :

Dense cities, with many impervious surfaces, and non vegetated, will be more and more faced with the heat island effect. The project *Aéro-Seine* deals with the temperature increase in urban space, using water from the Seine river for cooling air.

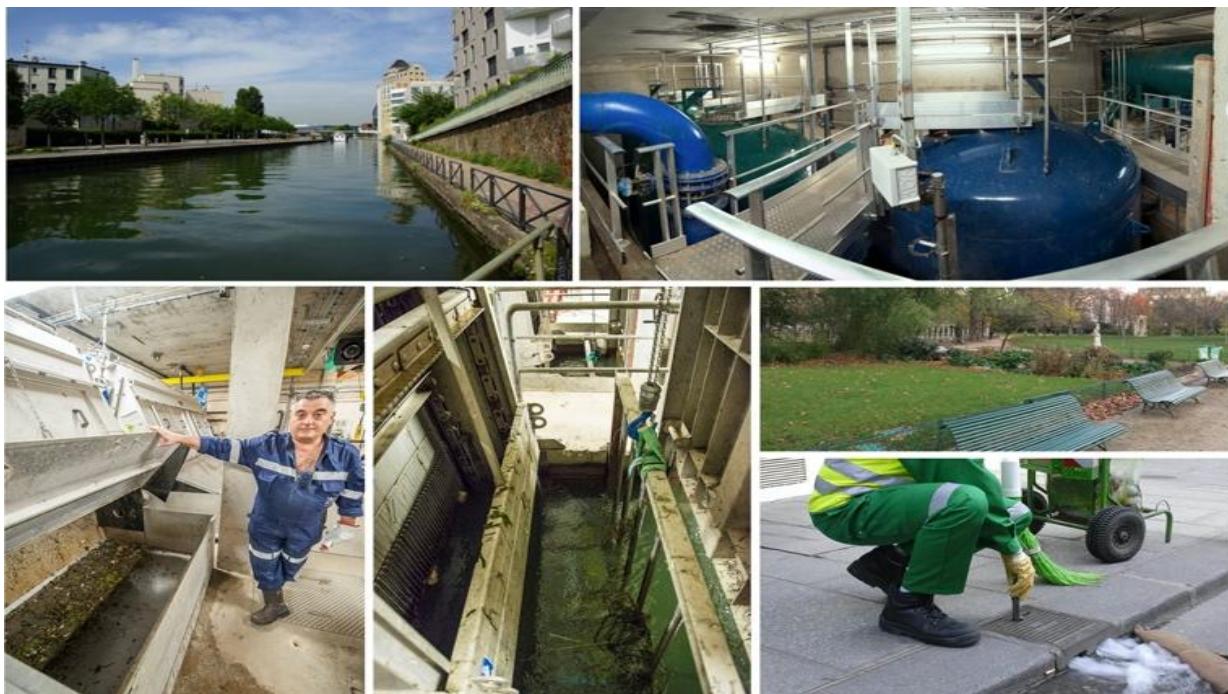
Keywords :

Water, urban space, city, reuse, cooling, heat island effect

In Paris, average daily temperatures are already around 2 to 3°C higher than in the rest of the Île-de-France region. In summer, this difference can reach 10°C compared to neighbouring rural areas. With average daily temperatures predicted to rise by 2°C to 4°C by the end of the 21st century, and an increasing number of heat waves, it is becoming urgent for the Paris region to adapt to climate change. We need to start thinking today about new ways to cool public spaces.

The City of Paris has a unique feature that could provide a solution : its non-potable water network or Seine water network. Designed in the mid-19th century to irrigate green spaces and clean the

streets. This network draws its water from the main rivier, Seine and the Ourcq Canal. The infrastructure, consisting of the network and water plants, produces water that is cheaper and less energy-intensive than drinking water. It's also not chemically treated, it is simply filtered through a 3mm grid.



Pictures of the non-potable water network in Paris

How can public spaces be cooled using non-potable water while complying with health standards ?

To address this issue, we have designed a cooling point connected to this Seine water network. The device works by overflow, during the summer. Once opened, the water rises and spreads over a surface made of porous material (quartz). The latter increases the contact surface between water and air, thereby helping to cool the ambient air.

In a study on the future of Paris's non-potable water network, APUR – Parisian urban planning workshop – estimates that "the combination of sprinkling and special road surfaces leads to spectacular results (...) This involves watering sunny surfaces in the morning before 10 a.m. and in the afternoon after 4 p.m., at a rate of 1 litre per square metre every 30 minutes (i.e. 2 litres/square metre/hour). This process reduces the air temperature by around 2°C in the morning and 4°C in the afternoon. In addition, tests conducted in Paris in July 2017 by researchers from LIED and Diderot University involved spraying water on the pavement and revealed temperature differences of nearly 15°C on the ground surface, with a perceived temperature drop of up to -1.5°C.

As part of the FAIRE program, organised by Pavillon de l'Arsenal, we designed Aéro-Seine for a street in the 20th arrondissement, in collaboration with city services and an engineering office. This device is around 20 square meters. It has three water outlets and it is made out of mineral aggregates. The device has been complemented by floor markings designed with children living in the neighbourhood.



Aéro-Seine, rue Blanchard, Paris, designed by Studio Idaë.

Aéro-Seine wasfinalist of the Human city design award in Seoul in 2019.

This project has led to otherexperiments in Paris, including the creation of a cleaning station for a social housing provider. Itsaimis to provide new uses for this Seine water network, whichiscurrentlyunderused.

Design : Studio Idaë

Engeeniring office : OGI

Sponsor : City of Paris / Pavillon de l'Arsenal



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Roxane ANDRÈS

Designer and Researcher

PhD Design - University Jean Monnet Saint-Etienne

Associated researcher - CRD ENSCI-ENS Paris-Saclay

Plateform Social Design

**Professor and coordinator DSAA Textile-territoires-mutations -
ESAA La Martinière-Diderot, Lyon**

Roxane Andrès is a French designer and researcher. Holding a PhD in Design (Jean Monnet University – Saint-Étienne), she is an associate researcher at the CRD ENS Paris-Saclay / ENSCI and teaches at ESAA La Martinière-Diderot (Lyon), where she coordinates the DSAA-Master programme in Textile, Territories, and Transformations.

Her practice explores the connections between matter, colour, and narratives, with a particular focus on sensitive contexts : care, ageing, funerary practices, and social vulnerabilities. She develops a situated approach to design, combining surveys, material and social experimentations, and participatory methods. Creative-inquiry plays a central role in her work, serving as a tool for attention and co-experience that brings forth narratives and forms of design rooted in lived experience.

Her research unfolds around three main axes: care and vulnerabilities, organic imaginaries, and the agency of colour. She is particularly interested in natural dyes, the bioclimatic transformations of textiles, and the ways in which materials can become vectors of relationships, memory, and collective transformation.

Committed to education and knowledge-sharing, she contributes to pedagogical programmes, public events, and collaborative research projects, working with cultural, scientific, and associative institutions. Through publications, conferences, and experiments, her work examines the role of design in sensitive environments and its capacity to support the transformation of social practices and imaginaries.

Caring for Ageing :

A Research-Creation Journey (2016–2023)

Roxane Andrès

Abstract :

This article traces a research-creation journey exploring the singularities of ageing through the lens of design, empathy, and participatory practices. Inspired by Félix Guattari's concept of a "design of singularities," the author questions the limitations of universal design paradigms, which often fail to account for the diversity of individual experiences—sometimes even creating exclusion or danger. Through four successive projects (2016–2023), including colour surveys, social experiments, and participatory studies in care homes, the research reveals how design can move beyond standardisation. By engaging with residents, caregivers, and local communities, the projects highlight the importance of sensory experience, intergenerational spaces, and habitability in redefining care homes as living, inclusive environments. The article argues for a design approach rooted in fieldwork, listening, and collective creation, ultimately proposing a shift from medicalised care to a broader, empathy-driven vision of ageing that values dignity, comfort, and social connection.

Keywords :

Ageing , Old age, Participatory design, Sensory experience , Care home habitability, Intergenerational spaces, Singularity in design,

Empathy-driven design , Solidarity, Social inclusion , Dignity, Research , Creation, Comfort

Introduction

In 2017, I published an article in *Sciences du Design* titled *From the Universal to the Singular : Caring for Ageing*. I drew on Félix Guattari's (1991) concept of a "design of singularities," in contrast to the recurring paradigm of so-called "universal design," often invoked in medical and social fields. A personal experience had struck me: observing a tactile paving system designed to guide visually impaired individuals, I witnessed a scene where an elderly woman, dragging her feet slightly, caught her cane in the strips and fell. This device, conceived in the name of accessibility, proved dangerous in her case. That day, I understood that the universal, far from including, could exclude and endanger. Since then, I have explored the following question: how can we practice a design of singularities, not in the abstraction of a manual of best practices, but through experience, listening, and fieldwork?

Between 2016 and 2023, four successive projects—surveys, social experiments, participatory studies—allowed me to explore these issues in various contexts. Each project, in its own way, informed the next.

Act 1 – A Colourful Survey on the Perception of Old Age (2017)

The first project was a survey conducted during the 2017 Saint-Étienne International Design Biennale as part of the "Ageing Well"

Living Lab. The setup invited participants of all ages to express their perception of old age through colour choices. Children spoke of grey and sepia, sad colours; those in their thirties evoked intimate, tender memories through nostalgic hues (wisteria, mimosa, cornflower); fifty- and sixty-year-olds expressed a desire for joyful, vibrant existence, as if to ward off old age (madder, papaya, pistachio); the oldest participants claimed deep, vibrant tones (indigo, purple, ruby). A striking moment came from an 86-year-old woman who refused to participate, saying : "*Since I became old, no one ever asks for my opinion. Besides, your palette is missing a colour—it's missing transparent.*" This quiet yet decisive act of non-participation showed that design must open itself to all forms of expression, even those that escape the intended framework. This colour survey convinced me that old age does not exist as a uniform category ("seniors"): it is traversed by singular, subjective perceptions, which design must reveal.





Act 2 – The Discreet Valet (2016)

In the same context, I designed *The Discreet Valet*, a chimerical piece of furniture blending domestic and medical elements: a cane, a grab bar, a mirror, and small intimate drawers. Through this piece, I explored the notion of grafting: borrowing from the familiar to preserve the continuity of “home” even within an institution. This reflection continued in workshops bringing together caregivers, gerontologists, institutions, and designers. All worked from the principle of grafting: how to support the transition from home to care home without abrupt rupture, how to maintain tangible landmarks of life and identity.

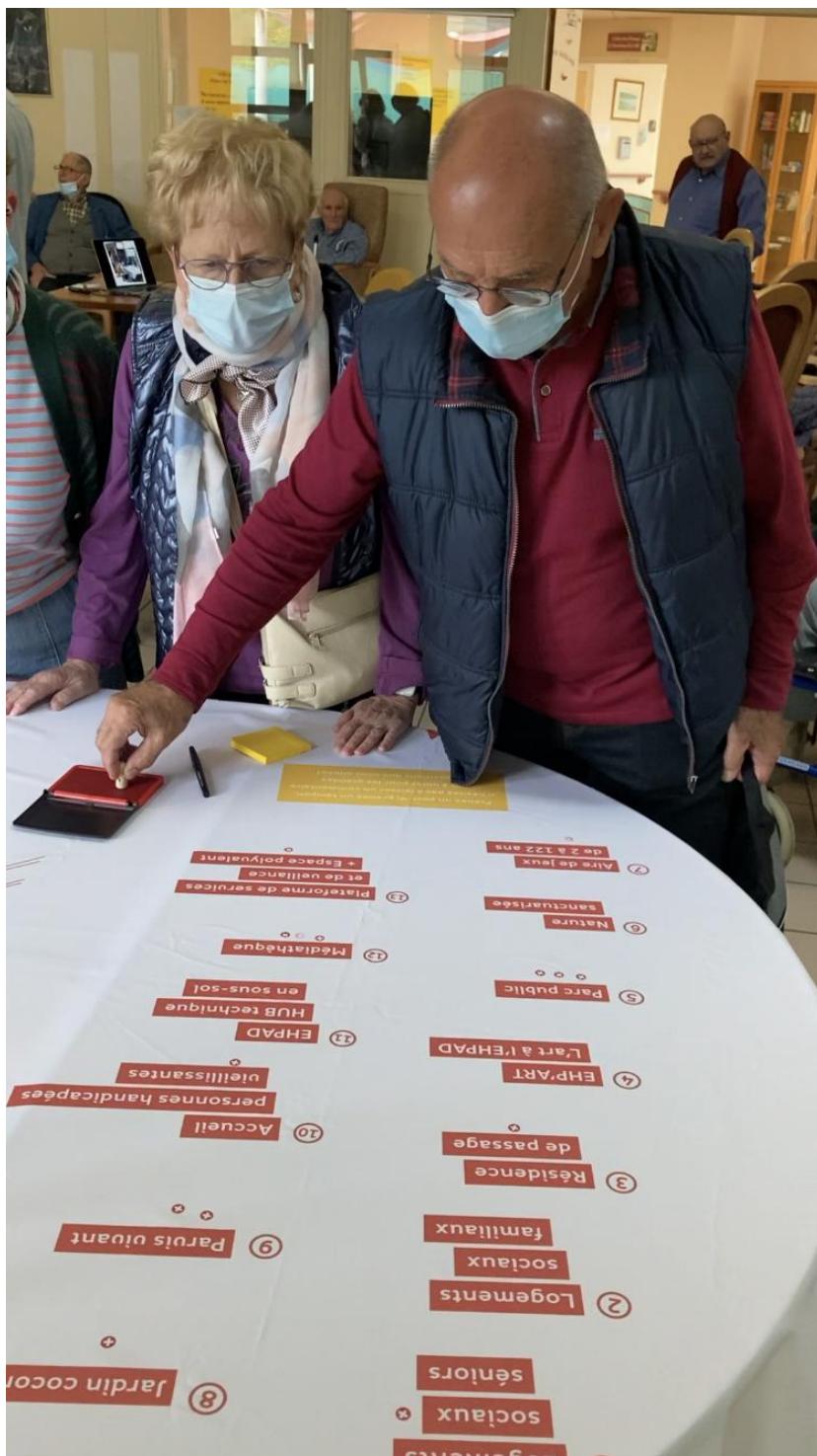


Act 3 – Study on the Transformation of Care Homes (2023–2024)

In 2023, this exploration took on new dimensions with a participatory study conducted with the collective *Activer les solidarités*. Over eight months, we worked on the habitability of care homes. The survey unfolded in several stages: immersion residencies, local outreach, interviews and sensitive portraits, opening up to the public orbiting these facilities, and 10 participatory workshops on themes such as shared spaces, the experience of “home,” outdoor spaces, new visions of care, the role of the medical, orientation, and landmarks. The methodology was rooted in empathy: role-playing, sensory experiences enabling caregivers and visitors to project themselves into the residents’ shoes. These collective experiences highlighted the importance of care homes as intergenerational spaces, as living third places—not isolated in a medical function, but connected to their neighbourhoods, residents, and local services—a re-evaluation of shared and intimate spaces.

In 2023, this reflection continued with a project led jointly by the CNSA and the Mobilier National (with designer Yohann Jacquot), focused on medication distribution in care homes. The trolley, a logistical and medical object, epitomised the challenge of integrating a device designed solely for efficiency into a living space. The survey, based on real-life observations and numerous testimonies, revealed the need to rethink the trolley as an object of habitability: adaptable and modular, grafted with domestic furniture, incorporating soft lighting as a temporal and spatial landmark (through changing hues), offering proximity services, and even a mobile screen for privacy and spatial reference. This

project showed that even the most technical objects can be reconfigured based on the lived experiences and sensitivities of those involved, to gently support the daily lives of everyone (caregivers, residents, and visitors).





The care home thus emerges not as a space of withdrawal, but as a living component of the neighbourhood, traversed by social bonds, intergenerational exchanges, and shared ways of living. This shift in perspective—from medical care to an expanded care that includes comfort, dignity, empathy, and openness to others—outlines a design of singularities capable of accompanying ageing without standardising it, by connecting it to life and society.

Conclusion

These research projects trace a common trajectory: that of a design rooted in inquiry and sensitive experience, opening spaces for expression for ageing individuals and those around them. Inquiry, understood as both a creative tool and an empathetic

stance, gathers perceptions, emotions, and gestures often invisible. It reveals that old age cannot be grasped as a homogeneous category, but as a plurality of singular situations, stories, and identities, redefining ways of living fully, to the very end.

1. This research was carried out in 2023-2024 in two nursing homes in the Loir -et-Cher department as part of a public contract awarded to the « Activating solidarities » composed by : Courtoisie urbaine, Aetc, Roxane Andrès, Charles Vitez Architecte, Vulpes Consulting, Boulay & levy Avocats, raoul Tachon Conseil .



Ilona GURJANOVA

**Estonian Association of designers President
Main organiser Tallinn Design Festival
FounderEstonian Design House**

Ilona Gurjanova has been offering graphic design and design management services to clients for over 35 years. Since 2004, as the president of a professional design organization, Ilona has collaborated with both private and public sectors, playing an

active role in shaping Estonian design policy. Since then, she has been involved in international and EU projects.

She has been the lead curator of multiple design projects across more than 15 countries. Her initiatives include founding the Tallinn Design Night Festival (Disainiöö), the Estonian Design Prize Bruno, the Estonian Design House, and Size Doesn't Matter. Moreover, she has organized several traveling exhibitions, the most recent being Upmade in Estonia.

Currently, Ilona is a lecturer at universities and colleges. Her extensive experience includes serving as a board member of BEDA (Bureau of European Design Associations) and EIDD (Design for All Europe), as well as being a jury member of international competitions. She also contributed to an international committee evaluating the level of design education in Estonia and Lithuania.

Ilona has authored articles on design awareness for local media and provided interviews to both local and international outlets. Her accolades include the Annual Award from the Cultural Endowment in 2009, the Foreign Ministry's Cultural Award in 2017, and several other recognitions.

Tallinn for All : Celebrating 20 Years of Inclusive Design and Social Innovation

Abstract :

Tallinn for All : 20 Years of Inclusive Urban Design

Launched in 2010, Tallinn for All celebrates two decades of advancing inclusive design, social innovation, and urban accessibility in Estonia. This initiative, born from Tallinn's European Capital of Culture 2011 preparations, aimed to eliminate discrimination against marginalized groups and enhance city life for all. Through participatory projects like the Gulliver Map, accessibility audits, and social design solutions (e.g., RFID terminals for the visually impaired), the project transformed public spaces, transportation, and cultural venues. Its legacy highlights the power of co-creation and user-centered design in fostering equitable, sustainable cities. The 20th-anniversary events (29 Sept–5 Oct 2025) will feature exhibitions, workshops, and public discussions, inviting local and international guests to explore the evolution of Tallinn for All.

Keywords :

Design for All, inclusive design, Universal design, Social innovation, Urban accessibility, Participatory design, Sustainable cities, Smart cities, Social equity, Diversity in design, Public space design, co-creation, Community engagement

Introduction

Tallinn, September 2025 – This autumn, the Tallinn for All initiative celebrates its 20th anniversary, marking two decades of pioneering work in inclusive design, social innovation, and urban accessibility. Launched in 2010 as part of Tallinn's preparation for its role as European Capital of Culture in 2011, the project was a response to concerns about discrimination against marginalized groups—such as the elderly, young mothers, and people with disabilities—and aimed to improve the quality of life for both locals and tourists by making the city more functional and accessible.

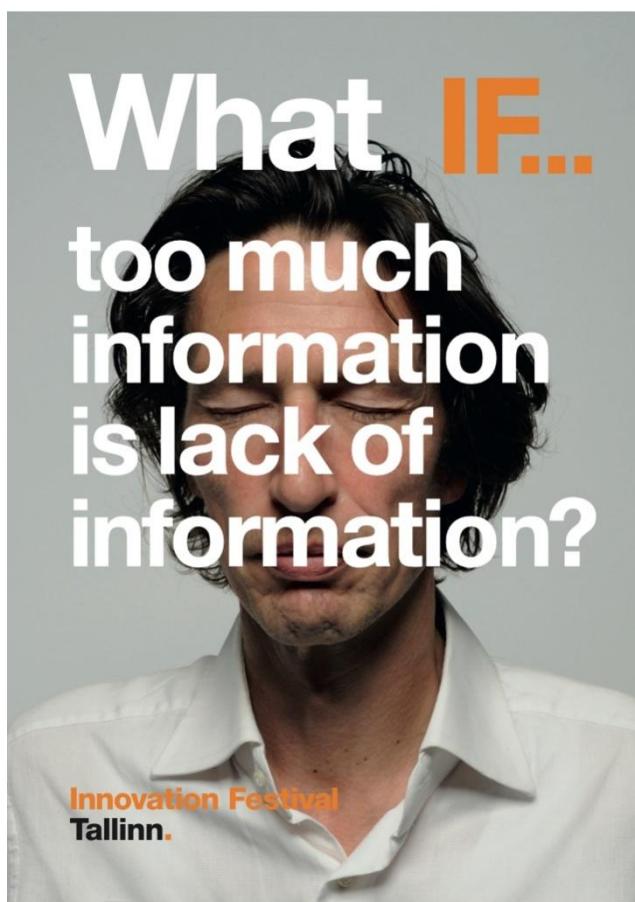
The initiative was spearheaded by the Estonian Association of Designers (EAD), in collaboration with international partners such as the Estonian Academy of Arts (EKA), the École Supérieure d'Art et de Design de Saint-Étienne, and EIDD-Design for All Europe. More than 100 people were involved, including city officials, students, professors, designers, specialists, and people with disabilities, reflecting a truly participatory and inclusive approach.

As part of this milestone, the XX Tallinn Design Festival / Disainiöö—the largest design event in the Baltic region—will take place from 29 September to 5 October 2025 in Tallinn, Estonia. This year's festival is a celebration of diversity, creativity, and collaboration, bringing together global thought leaders, designers, and innovators to explore how design can create a more inclusive and equitable world.

A Vision for Inclusive Urban Spaces

Tallinn for All was an international project designed to stimulate design innovation by involving disabled people and other users in problem-solving. The initiative focused on three core objectives:

1. Transforming Tallinn into a more accessible and comfortable tourism destination through social involvement, without discriminating against any group.
2. Achieving tangible results that draw public attention to the importance of inclusive design, stimulate innovation, and demonstrate the potential for economic growth.
3. Introducing the "Design for All" methodology to participants through hands-on experience, fostering a culture of user-centered design.



The project was structured around three main challenges:

- **Accessibility in Tallinn's Old Town and cinemas.**
- **Information design for public transportation.**
- **Social design, including products and services for visually impaired people.**

Key Achievements and Innovations

1. Gulliver Map Project

Inspired by Japanese architect Junzo Okada, the Gulliver Map was installed in Tallinn's city center. This large-scale, interactive map invited residents and tourists to share their experiences, highlighting both the joys and challenges of navigating the city. The project provided critical insights into accessibility barriers and opened a dialogue between citizens, designers, and policymakers.



2. Accessibility Audits

Teams of students and experts conducted detailed audits of Tallinn's public spaces, including cinemas, bus stops, and tourist routes. Their findings led to tangible improvements, such as the introduction of low-floor buses, clearer signage, and inclusive wayfinding systems, many of which were later adopted by the city.

3. Social Design Solutions

Innovative projects, such as RFID-enabled information terminals and tactile maps, were developed to assist visually impaired travelers. These solutions emphasized user-centered design, ensuring that technology and infrastructure serve everyone—from tourists to locals with disabilities.



4. Collaboration with the Black Nights Film Festival

The initiative partnered with the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival (PÖFF) to audit and enhance the accessibility of its venues, setting a precedent for barrier-free cultural experiences.

Methodology and Participatory Approach

The project followed a structured roadmap:

- Briefings to working groups, focusing on 10 main urban challenges, with three selected for in-depth exploration.
- Research, including street surveys and design audits for cinemas.
- Seminars and workshops on topics such as "Cities for All" and "Mobility."
- Concept development, translating research findings into actionable proposals.

Mentors from across Europe, including Francesc Aragall (Spain), Julia Cassim (UK), and Avril Accolla (Italy), guided participants through the process, ensuring a high standard of innovation and inclusivity.

Legacy and Lessons Learned

Over the past two decades, Tallinn for All has demonstrated the power of co-creation and design thinking in shaping inclusive cities. Its success lies in bridging the gap between top-down policies and grassroots participation, proving that meaningful change requires collaboration across sectors.

Key lessons include:

- Companies must evolve their design processes to better meet diverse consumer needs.
- Administrations must ensure that no citizen is excluded by social evolution or market trends.
- Professionals must integrate "Design for All" criteria and user participation into their practice.

The project's impact was recognized with the DME Award 2012 for Best Non-Profit, and its findings were showcased internationally, including at an exhibition in Helsinki.

Join the Celebration

The 20th-anniversary events will feature exhibitions, workshops, and public discussions, inviting locals and international guests to explore the evolution of inclusive design in Tallinn. This year's festival promises to be a landmark event, celebrating 20 years of innovative, socially significant, and forward-thinking design.

Why Attend?

- Network with 100+ global leaders and Estonia's most pioneering designers.
- Explore transformative design that revitalizes forgotten spaces, such as this year's venue—the historic Krulli manufacturer.
- Engage in meaningful dialogue on diversity, sustainability, and innovation with visionaries like Patricia Moore (USA), Rama Gheerawo (UK), and Cameron Sinclair (USA/UK).

For more information, visit [Tallinn for All's official platform](#).

Conclusion

Through initiatives like Tallinn for All, the Estonian Association of Designers has championed accessibility, social inclusion, and the global recognition of Estonian design. By advocating for inclusive policies and fostering international collaborations, the association continues to prove that design is not just about aesthetics—it is a powerful tool for social change, equity, and sustainable development.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Tallinn for All, the Estonian Association of Designers remains committed to building cities that work for everyone—where creativity, inclusivity, and community drive progress. Here's to the next 20 years of designing a better world, together.

Estonian Association of Designers,
Tallinn Design Festival,
Estonian Design House,



Letter from the Chairman's Desk By Sunil Bhatia PhD

One day, I found a small broken rubber band lying on the road. It was probably a hair band used by girls to hold their hair in place. I don't know why, but I rolled one end of the band around my index finger and pressed it with my thumb so it wouldn't slip. Then I stretched the other end and released it. As my thumb lifted and the band snapped back, it shot straight through the air for a short distance.

In that moment, I realized that this ancient play instinct—striking a target using the tension of a stretched band—was nothing new. It was a childhood game, and the rubber itself was guiding the user on how to strike a target.

This simple mechanism—rolling one end around a finger, holding it with the thumb, stretching the other end, and releasing both simultaneously—contains the seed of many later inventions. From this idea came the catapult, where a Y-shaped wooden piece helps the user align the projectile with the target. Similarly, bending a flexible stem around a tied stone helped early people design tools for hitting targets.

The bow and arrow follows the same principle. A thin strip of wood bent with a thread creates tension. The groove on the bow guides the arrow so that it shoots exactly where the archer aligns it.

With technological progress, pistols and rifles were designed—yet even these advanced tools retained guiding features. At the top of the barrel, a small spike helps the user align the shot. Modern weapons even have two sights—one near the muzzle and one near the eye—so that when both and the target align, the user knows the shot is accurate.

Even a mobile phone camera guides the user. While clicking a photo, the screen gives constant suggestions for optimal focus and alignment. By simply following those prompts, even an amateur can take near-professional photographs.

Many discoveries and inventions have been accidental. A product is often created unintentionally, but its design reveals the purpose for which it is naturally suited.

A classic example is the feeding bottle nipple, designed to imitate the mother's breast. When the nipple enters the infant's mouth, it triggers the instinctive sucking response learned in the womb. The bottle guides the child, and the child holds it the same way they hold the mother's breast to prevent it from slipping. When the milk is finished, the infant simply pushes the nipple out.

Children's toys often produce sounds that guide the child's attention. Even a hungry infant's cry guides the mother.

In nature, every tree has a unique canopy and structure. Early humans lived on trees for millions of years, and each branch guided the climber—its thickness indicating whether it could bear weight.

Once in a clothing store, I saw a young girl pick up an unusual dress. I couldn't understand how anyone could wear such a garment. But when she emerged from the trial room, the dress fit her perfectly. The openings for the neck and arms guided the wearer, just as a mother guides her child while dressing them. Sweaters with no front opening are worn through similar guidance—from the neck downward. Buttons and zippers later enhanced this guidance.

While washing a narrow-mouthed cooking vessel, I found it difficult to clean the bottom. Eventually, I realized the vessel's shape itself was guiding me—tilting it slightly made scrubbing easier. Manual cleaning is often superior to machine washing because every vessel has a unique shape that demands special attention, which dishwashers cannot provide.

Machines, too, guide their operators. I remember visiting a flour mill as a child. As I handed wheat to the operator, he adjusted the machine wheel for the required fineness. He constantly checked the flour samples and allowed the machine's feedback to guide his adjustments.

Ancient builders understood guidance deeply. The vertical height of early houses was limited by the strength of the bottom bricks. Unbaked bricks allowed only short structures; baked bricks

allowed taller ones. The arrival of RCC gave enormous freedom to build vertically. The load-bearing capacity of the lowest units always guided the total height.

Our ancestors' wisdom can be seen everywhere: hunters followed footprints and the smell of urine to track prey. Modern detectives follow broken glass, blood drops, or fingerprints to trace criminals. In agriculture, the air guides husk and grain during winnowing: light husk flies away while heavy grains fall. The pulley guides the rope while drawing water from a well. Soil, water availability, and season guide farmers to the right crops.

Ancient people understood that liquids flow toward slopes. To prevent spillage, they designed pitchers that guided water to stay contained. Sewer lines, freshwater pipelines, and lids for vessels all follow this guiding principle. Lids preserve heat and prevent contamination.

Human clothing evolved similarly. Different climates guided the invention of different garments. Desert dwellers often wear earthy or white colors to remain visible and cope with extreme sunlight. Plants like cactus are shaped by nature's guidance to conserve water.

Civilization advanced because products continuously guided humans.

Even the human immune system works on this principle. A small dose of disease trains the body to respond better in the future. Vaccines use this concept. Once upgraded, the immune memory never returns to its earlier stage.

Bent roads are preferred over long straight highways because they keep drivers alert. Straight roads induce drowsiness. Narrow streets and height barriers guide heavy vehicles to stay out. Bridges and flyovers have load limitations that guide users through design.

Similarly, stacking books requires strong flooring—the load guides architectural design. Urban population density guides the infrastructure needed, from sewer lines to water supply systems. Even gender plays a role. Women's hostels require different design considerations to ensure privacy. Menstrual cycles synchronize among women living together and require stronger sewer systems to prevent clogging. Hostels for the differently-abled require unique, clearly guiding layouts depending on the disability.

Every product should guide its user effectively. Every person deserves to live with dignity in a world shaped by thoughtful design.

This is the final issue of our declared year 2025, with Women's Designer and Guest Editor for December 2025 (Vol-20 No-12), Josyane Franc, Advisor to International Design Networks and Knight of the French National Order of Merit for Culture. She has honored us by accepting our invitation. She is highly respected in the global design community, and her contributions are valued by governments and organizations worldwide.

Enjoy Reading.

With Regards

Dr. Sunil Bhatia

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Forthcoming Issues

January 2026 Vol-21 No-1



Jani Nayar

She found it in the Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality (SATH), an organization dedicated to making the world more welcoming for travelers with disabilities. Since 2024, the name was changed to Society for Accessible Tourism& Hospitality, keeping the acronym SATH.

What began as a role in tour operations quickly grew into a deep, lifelong commitment. Jani served as SATH's Executive Coordinator before becoming its Executive Director, a role in which she now serves as the organization's voice, advocate, and bridge between communities, governments, and industry leaders. Her mission: to ensure that travel is a right, not a privilege, for people of all abilities.

Her work has taken her to some of the world's most significant platforms for accessible travel. She has spoken and led workshops at events including the World Summit Destinations for All in Montreal, the Adventure Travel World Summit, the Africa Travel

Association, the New York Travel Show, the Caribbean Tourism Conference, the Abilities Expo, the World Congress on Disabilities, the International Institute on Peace through Tourism, the Adventure Tour Operators' Association of India, SATTE in India, ReaTech and the World Tourism Forum in Brazil, and the First Symposium on Accessible Tourism in Ecuador—among many others.

Feburary 2026 Vol-21No-2



Dr. Ravindra Singh, B. Tech, M. Des, Ph. D

Assistant professor, Department of Design, Delhi Technological University, Delhi, India

Specialization in Mechanical Engineering, Product Design, Universal Design



Sh. Partha Pratim Das , B.E, M.Tech, M.Des, Ph.D(Pursuing)

Assistant professor , Department of Design , Delhi Technological University, Delhi, India

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, untrained 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 manmade designs was a significant attempt of thinking beyond survival and no

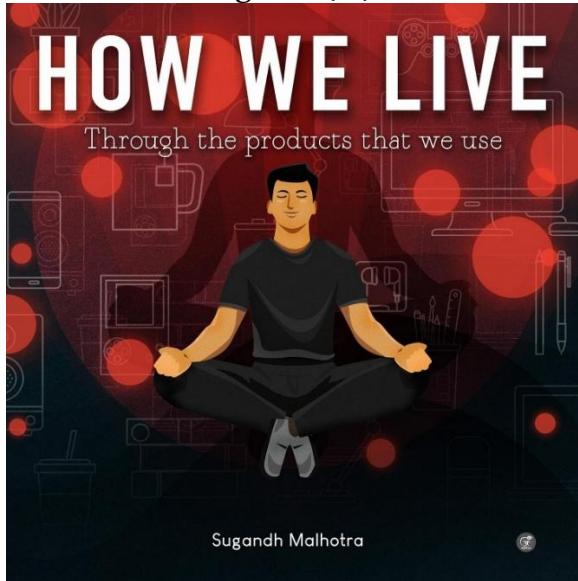
doubt this contributed in establishing our supremacy over other living beings. Somewhere in journey of progress we lost the legacy of ancestors in shaping minds of future generations and completely ignored their philosophy and established a society that was beyond their imagination. I picked up such 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.

www.lap-publishing.com

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)
 Sugandh(at)iitb.ac.in



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.



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

MOVE MUMBAI: Kaali Peeli and Beyond

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

IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay (INDIA)
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“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/Move-Mumbai-Kaali-Peeli/dp/938821000X), [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/Move-Mumbai-Kaali-Peeli/dp/938821000X), [Astitva Prakashan](https://www.astitvaprakashan.com/Move-Mumbai-Kaali-Peeli-and-Beyond)

Universal in Design Architecture

On enabling and empowering
a diverse population

Camilla Ryhl

The Danish
Architectural Press

MEANINGFUL, SUSTAINABLE,
HUMANITY CENTERED



DESIGN
FOR A
BETTER WORLD

DON NORMAN

Author of The Design of Everyday Things

[sample chapter](#)

Emilio Rossi (Editor)

Innovation Design for Social Inclusion and Sustainability

Design Cultures and Creative Practices for Urban Natural Heritage



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News

1 The winners of the Access City Award 2025

The winners of the Access City Award 2025

1st prize Vienna, Austria



Vienna, Austria's capital, spans 415 km² and offers a diverse cityscape that ranges from the historic city centre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to vibrant modern districts and expansive green spaces. Home to more than 2 million inhabitants, Vienna is renowned for its high quality of life and has earned the title of the world's most liveable city multiple times. Accessibility and inclusion are at the heart of the city's policies, ensuring that all people, regardless of ability, can participate fully in urban life.

Receiving the Access City Award 2025 is a significant recognition of the City of Vienna's longstanding commitment to improving the quality of life for all residents. It is proof that our efforts as the Vienna city government to implement accessibility in all areas of life have been successful. Vienna has repeatedly been named the world's most liveable city for good reason.

This award motivates us to continue on this inclusive path and to make Vienna even more attractive for all Viennese.

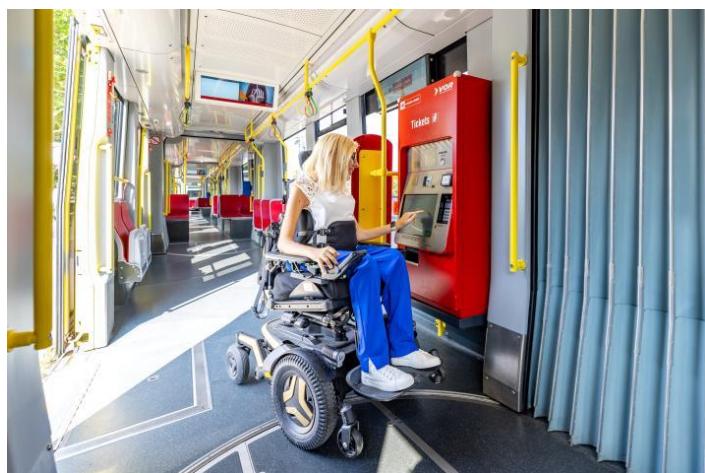
Dr Michael Ludwig, Mayor and Governor of Vienna

Public transport: a model of accessibility

Vienna's public transport system is largely barrier-free, featuring accessible underground trains, buses and 95% of bus and tram stops. The city has implemented a variety of measures to enhance accessibility, such as tactile guidance systems, intelligent traffic lights, low-floor vehicles, and both audio and visual information for passengers. Notably, Vienna has introduced a globally unique emergency intercom system that allows passengers with speech, hearing or learning impairments to communicate directly with station control centres. Additionally, a real-time sign language avatar provides live alerts on service disruptions, making public transport even more accessible.

Dr Michael Ludwig, Mayor and Governor of Vienna Public transport: a model of accessibility

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© Wiener Linien / Simon Wöhner

Vienna's public transport system is largely accessible.

Comprehensive accessibility in public services and buildings

Vienna is committed to ensuring all public facilities and services are accessible. This is achieved through strict accessibility requirements for new buildings and the retrofitting of existing structures, currently covering over 1,200 city-owned properties. The multi-stage retrofitting plan is developed in consultation with organisations representing persons with disabilities. Vienna's e-government services also provide a seamless online option for many administrative tasks, further enhancing accessibility. The city's accessibility strategy includes financial support and counselling for barrier-free home conversions, ensuring that residents with disabilities can adapt their living spaces to suit their needs.



Vienna's commitment to accessibility extends across its public services and buildings, ensuring inclusive spaces for both residents and visitors.

© WienTourismus/Christian Stemper

Inclusive Vienna 2030: a roadmap for the future

The 'Inclusive Vienna 2030' strategy sets out a vision for an inclusive city with equal rights and participation for all. Developed through a broad, participatory process, the strategy outlines 12 key areas, including empowerment and accessible education, with 55 specific measures aimed at making the city even more inclusive. This multi-year plan will be implemented in collaboration with stakeholders from interest groups, self-advocates and experts. It ensures that the city's accessibility

efforts continue beyond legal requirements, addressing both physical and social barriers to inclusion.

Participation and monitoring: a continuous dialogue

Vienna's commitment to accessibility is also reflected in its robust monitoring and participation systems. The Vienna Monitoring Centre tracks the city's compliance with disability rights and offers recommendations to improve services. Moreover, the city's Social Fund supports thousands of people with disabilities in areas such as labour market integration and housing, and includes a Customer Council for direct feedback.



A meeting of Vienna Social Fund highlights the city's commitment to accessibility through active participation and continuous dialogue with persons with disabilities.

© Fonds Soziales Wien

Education and awareness initiatives

Vienna promotes accessibility through education and training. An e-learning programme on accessibility, featuring sign language and screen-reader compatibility, is part of the onboarding process for public utility employees. Awareness-raising campaigns and anti-discrimination measures foster an inclusive and diverse community culture.

A holistic approach to social inclusion

Vienna's holistic approach to accessibility is exemplified by the newly reopened Wien Museum, which is fully accessible to persons with disabilities. The museum features tactile floor guidance systems, Braille signage, tactile models and a digital guide that provides room descriptions, sign language interpretation, and easy-to-understand language. The city's inclusive approach ensures that public spaces, services and cultural institutions like the Wien Museum cater to everyone, regardless of ability, fostering a truly inclusive urban environment.



The Wien Museum embodies Vienna's holistic approach to social inclusion, featuring tactile maps, Braille signage, and other accessible features to ensure an inclusive cultural experience.

© Wien Museum/Lisa Rastl

2nd prize Nuremberg, Germany

544,414 inhabitants



Shutterstock

Nuremberg stands as a beacon of peace and human rights, having embraced this mission since 2001 due to its profound historical responsibility and forward-looking vision. Home to over 544,000 residents from more than 170 countries, the city celebrates diversity in all its forms. Approximately 11.6% of the population has a recognised severe disability, underscoring Nuremberg's commitment to ensuring inclusion for everyone. Mayor Marcus König's motto, 'We are all Nuremberg', reflects this ethos, fostering a city that values every individual.

We are all Nuremberg! This is my motto as Nuremberg's Lord Mayor. It means that all residents are Nurembergers – regardless of their origin, religion, sexual identity or orientation, age, or whether they have a disability. Everyone belongs to our city, and together we shape its future. Equal participation is the fundamental prerequisite for this. Removing all types of barriers and ensuring the inclusion of people with disabilities are our top priorities.

Marcus König, Lord Mayor of Nuremberg

Inclusive urban planning and public transport

Nuremberg's Disability Council plays a central role in shaping the city's future, actively participating in urban development and public space planning. This Council ensures that accessibility is a core consideration in all initiatives, from structural upgrades to citizen participation formats. Nearly 100% of Nuremberg's underground transport system is accessible, with lifts and guidance systems for the people with visual impairments at every station. Around 85% of tram stops are accessible, and ongoing efforts aim to retrofit the remaining bus platforms. The entire vehicle fleet, including buses and trams, features gap bridges and folding ramps, making public transport inclusive for all.



Accessible lifts at Nuremberg's train stations ensure barrier-free travel for all passengers, reflecting the city's commitment to inclusive public transport.

© Andreas Neuer / VAG Verkehrs-Aktiengesellschaft Nuremberg

Technological innovation and digital accessibility

Nuremberg is at the forefront of digital accessibility, implementing the Barrier-free Information Technology Ordinance. The city's software and websites are designed to be accessible through tools like screen readers and magnifiers. An AI-based plain-language avatar and text-to-speech tools enhance communication, while German Sign Language videos and plain language content ensure information reaches everyone. This specialist approach extends to all public services, with accessibility considered across social affairs, education, culture and healthcare.

Nuremberg's Action Plan website serves as a central hub for initiatives promoting inclusion and accessibility, aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

© City of Nuremberg

Nuremberg's action plan for inclusion

A landmark moment for the city was the adoption of the First Nuremberg Action Plan to Implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2021. This comprehensive plan includes over 270 measures across eight fields of action, with 187 already implemented. The Inclusion Coordination Group, established by the Mayor, oversees these efforts, ensuring that every city department prioritises inclusion. Regular conferences, working groups and the city's Disability Council – comprised of 40 members, including 26 with disabilities – drive these initiatives forward.



Nuremberg's Disability Council actively shapes the city's accessibility initiatives, fostering inclusion and representing the diverse needs of the community.

© City of Nuremberg

Cultural and social initiatives

Nuremberg's vibrant cultural scene reflects its inclusive spirit. Projects such as the Theatre Dreamteam, comprising actors with and without disabilities, and the EveryBody Festival, showcasing inclusive art, enrich the city's cultural landscape. The city's largest

provider for adults with disabilities, noris inklusion gGmbH, offers services ranging from housing and education to leisure and work opportunities.



Inclusive initiatives like dance workshops in Nuremberg bring together people of all abilities, fostering creativity and community engagement.

© Sophie Pflamminger / tanzn GbR

Ongoing collaboration and awareness raising

The Disability Council plays a pivotal role in ensuring that all accessibility projects reflect the needs of the community. An annual dialogue with the Lord Mayor facilitates continuous feedback and improvement. The city's Disposal Fund supports inclusive projects across departments, promoting long-term sustainability. Additionally, regular newsletters and outreach efforts keep the community informed and engaged.

3rd prize Cartagena, Spain



221,364 inhabitants

Shuttlestock

With a history spanning over 3,000 years, Cartagena is a dynamic port city that seamlessly blends its rich heritage with cutting-edge accessibility initiatives. Its pedestrian-friendly old town, adorned with neoclassical and modernist architecture, offers a welcoming environment for all visitors. The city's lively cultural calendar, featuring highlights such as Easter celebrations, the Carthaginians and Romans Festival, and the La Mar de Músicas Festival, is thoughtfully designed to include everyone, regardless of ability.

Accessibility in a city like Cartagena is essential to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their physical or mental abilities, can fully participate in urban life. An accessible city promotes autonomy and social inclusion, enabling people with disabilities or temporary mobility difficulties to navigate the urban environment with ease and safety. Recognising this, the City Council of Cartagena incorporates accessibility criteria into all municipal projects and initiatives it undertakes, while also promoting the city's sustainable development.

Cristina Mora Menendez de la Vega, Councillor for the Department of Social Policy, Equality and Family, Cartagena City Council

Urban accessibility and inclusive infrastructure

Cartagena's commitment to accessibility is evident in its urban landscape. Guided by strategic plans like the Urban Agenda and the Cartago Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, the city prioritises barrier-free public spaces. Initiatives include pedestrian-friendly

zones with single-level surfaces and adapted parks and beaches, ensuring that all residents and visitors can navigate the city with ease. Special emphasis is placed on cognitive accessibility, exemplified by the pictograms and easy-to-understand information provided by the Department of Social Policy building – the first in Murcia to offer this feature.



Cartagena's pedestrian zones are also wheelchair-accessible.
© Cartagena City Council

Accessible transport solutions

The city's smart transport infrastructure sets a benchmark in inclusivity. Collaborating with ONCE, Spain's national organisation for persons with visual impairments, Cartagena has introduced smart pedestrian crossings and audible traffic signals. Smart bus shelters equipped with augmented reality and audible announcements enhance the experience for passengers with visual and cognitive impairments. Additionally, a system for indicating free parking spaces for people with reduced mobility in the city centre and Low Emission Zones further bolsters accessibility.



Cartagena enhances mobility with clearly marked accessible parking spaces, supporting mobility for all residents and visitors.

© Cartagena City Council

Inclusive tourism and cultural initiatives

Cartagena aspires to become the capital of accessible tourism in the Mediterranean. Its award-winning 'Beach for All' initiative provides assisted bathing services with amphibious equipment and trained staff, having served over 500 individuals in 2024 alone. Major cultural events such as the Three Kings Parade, Easter celebrations, and the Carthaginians and Romans Festival reserve dedicated spaces for persons with disabilities, ensuring an inclusive experience for all. The city is also developing immersive technologies to allow individuals who cannot physically attend events, such as Holy Week processions, to experience them virtually.



City-supported services ensure everyone can enjoy the beach.

© Cartagena City Council

Technological innovations and digital accessibility

The city's digital infrastructure reflects a strong commitment to accessibility. Cartagena's municipal website ranks among the most accessible in Spain, and tourist information is available in Braille, augmented reality, and AI formats. The city's Technical Office for Accessibility, the first of its kind in the region, works closely with disability groups to audit and enhance these efforts.



Cartagena's Office of Technical Accessibility works to improve inclusivity through collaboration and innovative solutions, ensuring equal access for all residents and visitors.

© Cartagena City Council

Participation and collaboration

Collaboration with the community is central to Cartagena's accessibility strategy. The Municipal Disability Plan, developed in partnership with 40 disability organisations, ensures that policies are both inclusive and impactful. The city's Municipal Commission for Accessibility oversees the implementation of these measures, involving stakeholders in all aspects of urban planning and service delivery. Residents can easily communicate their needs through established channels, fostering a responsive and adaptive

Special mention for accessible sports infrastructure Nuremberg, Germany



544,414 inhabitants

© Nathalie Zweifel / Nuremberg Falcons

Renowned for its rich history and vibrant cultural scene, Nuremberg has distinguished itself in the field of accessibility with a strong focus on sports. In the 2025 Access City Award, Nuremberg not only secured second place but also received a Special Mention for Accessible Sports Infrastructure, exemplifying how sports can foster inclusion and equality. Its dedication to this cause was especially prominent during the 2023 'Year of Inclusion in Sport', demonstrating the city's ongoing commitment to creating a more accessible future.

This recognition is a great incentive for us. Accessibility in sport means more than simply removing barriers – it is about providing everyone with the opportunity to actively participate, enjoy a sense of community, and engage in exercise. We would like to thank all those who are dedicated to the inclusion process in Nuremberg and who have made these awards possible. We are proud to be consistently advancing the path towards greater participation in sport in Nuremberg!

Cornelia Trinkl, Deputy Mayor for Schools and Sport

Fostering inclusion through sports



Nuremberg's efforts were showcased during its involvement in the 2023 Special Olympics World Games, where the city hosted the Austrian delegation. This event was not just a milestone but a catalyst for sustained partnerships. Sports clubs, schools, and disability organisations collaborated to create a lasting network that continues to promote inclusive sports opportunities across the city.

Special Olympics athletes Fenea Scharf, Marvin Scheibler, and Andrée John celebrate their upcoming participation in the 2025 Special Olympics State Games in Erlangen. Their club, TSV Altenfurt e.V., has become the first Nuremberg sports club to register

© Katrin Fottner / City of Nuremberg

Financial support for accessible programmes

Since 2020, the city has provided an annual grant of €20,000 to sports clubs. This funding supports a wide range of inclusive initiatives, from purchasing adaptive equipment, such as wheelchair basketball gear, to financing construction projects and specialised training programmes. Inclusive swimming groups and wheelchair basketball projects are just some of the many programmes made possible through this support, benefiting individuals with diverse needs.



Cartagena provides an annual grant to support inclusive sports like wheelchair basketball by funding adaptive equipment and specialised training.

© Nathalie Zweifel / Nuremberg Falcons

Institutional commitment and future plans

Nuremberg's dedication to accessibility extends beyond individual projects. In August 2024, the city established a permanent position focused on 'Inclusion through Sport'. This role will ensure that accessible sports remain a priority in municipal planning, reflecting the city's long-term vision for inclusion.

Collaboration and community involvement

Collaboration with key organisations, such as the Behinderten- und Versehrtensportverein (BVSV) Nürnberg e.V., plays a crucial role in Nuremberg's strategy. This partnership enhances accessibility and ensures that the voices of persons with disabilities are heard and integrated into decision-making processes, further strengthening the city's inclusive sports infrastructure.

Special mention for role model in the built environment and transport Borås, Sweden

114,000 inhabitants



© City of Borås

Nestled in Sweden's western region, Borås is renowned for its rich textile heritage and commitment to environmental sustainability. This dynamic city, with its rugged landscapes and diverse demographics, has earned a reputation for progressive urban development. Borås's dedication to inclusivity and accessibility has been recognised with a Special Mention for Role Model in the Built Environment and Transport at the 2025 Access City Award.

In the City of Borås, accessibility and inclusion are fundamental cornerstones of everything we do. All residents, regardless of their abilities, should have equal rights and opportunities to participate fully in community life. There is broad political consensus on building a city where no one is left behind. By listening to the experiences and needs of people with disabilities, we can work together to create a more accessible and inclusive Borås.

Ylva Lengberg, Lead City Councillor

Integrating accessibility into urban planning

Borås has established itself as a leader in accessibility by exceeding national standards and integrating inclusive design principles into all urban planning and construction projects. The city's guidelines ensure that accessibility is considered from the

earliest stages of development, promoting universal design and removing barriers. This forward-thinking approach aims to create an urban environment where all residents can participate equally in society.



Borås prioritises inclusivity in urban design, as shown by this wheelchair ramp that seamlessly connects pedestrian areas.

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Accessible public transport

Key highlights include the city's innovative approach to accessible public transport, where it was one of the first in Europe to implement raised bus boarding platforms before legal requirements for low-platform buses.

Borås has continued to enhance its public transport system with tactile markings at bus and train stations and accessible screen and sound systems on local buses for persons with hearing and visual impairments. The city's procurement policies mandate disability awareness training for bus drivers, emphasising interaction and support for passengers with physical and cognitive disabilities.

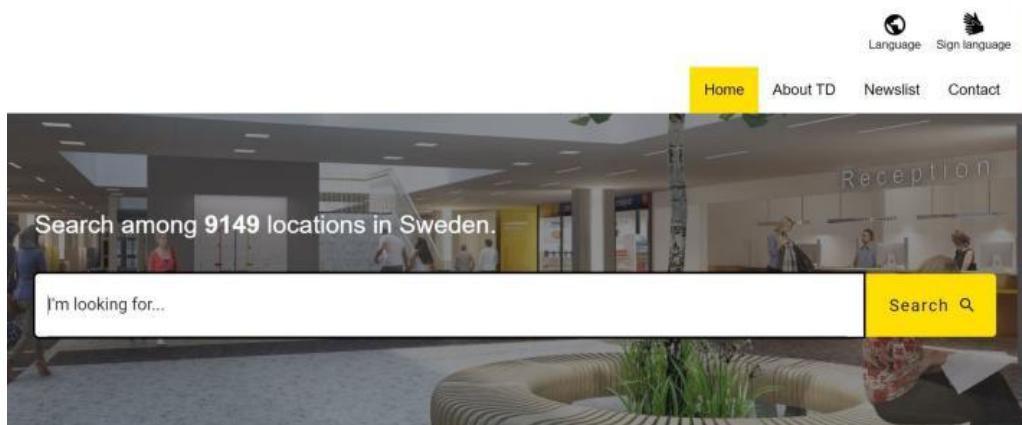
Borås's public buses are equipped with accessible ramps and their trained drivers are always ready to help.

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Innovative tools and initiatives

A key initiative in Borås's strategy is the Accessibility Database, which provides detailed information on the accessibility of more

than 300 public places and services. This resource helps residents navigate the city more effectively and ensures transparency in accessibility standards.



The Accessibility Database (TD) is today the only database in Sweden that offers information to residents and visitors about physical accessibility in everyday life. TD is owned, operated and developed by the Västra Götaland region. [Read more about the Accessibility Database](#)

Borås's Accessibility Database provides detailed information on over 9,000 locations, ensuring transparency and ease of navigation for residents and visitors.

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In addition, during election years, the city inventories all polling stations and develops educational materials for election workers to guarantee accessible voting processes.

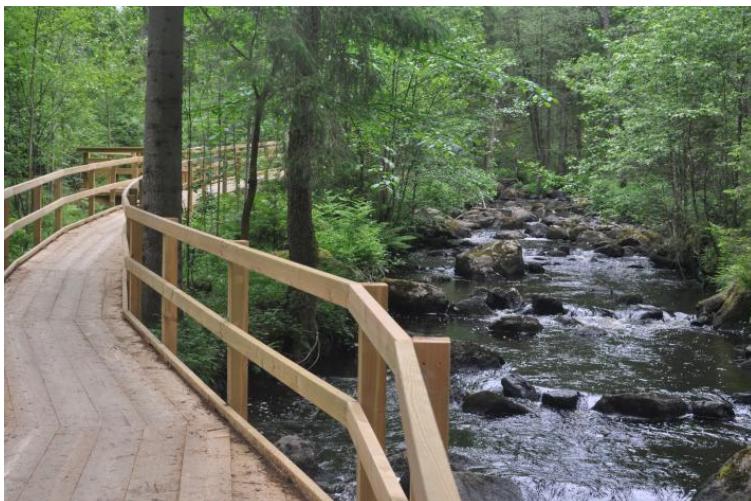


Borås ensures accessible elections with tools like this voting guide, designed to support individuals with disabilities in understanding and participating in the voting process.

© City of Borås

Inclusive recreational spaces

Borås has also focused on making public recreational areas more inclusive. Recent playground renovations feature companion swings, park benches with armrests, and picnic tables with extended tabletops, enabling people of all abilities to enjoy these spaces comfortably.



Borås promotes inclusivity in outdoor recreation with accessible nature trails like this boardwalk, ensuring everyone can enjoy the city's natural beauty.

© City of Borås

A national and international role model

Borås's accessibility initiatives have garnered national acclaim, frequently cited as a model of good practice across Sweden. The city's work on early-stage planning, the Accessibility Database, and inclusive design has made it a sought-after lecturer at municipal and architectural conferences. Borås actively participates in regional networks and collaborates with the National Agency of Participation.

Internationally, Borås extends its expertise beyond borders. The city has engaged in a three-year collaboration with Vračar, Serbia, and regularly shares its insights at conferences in Norway. Borås's efforts have also been recognised with prestigious awards, including the European Design for All Award in 2019 and the International Award for Universal Design in 2020.

(Courtesy : European Commission)



Programme and Events



Spark Student Design Awards: Any current University-level (or above) student, in any design category. (All entries in this competition must be student work, not professional work. Entries may be submitted from any time period of the student's study –could be a piece from last year).

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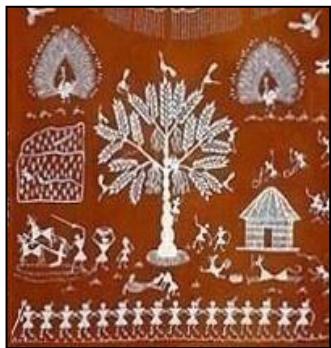
Best of KBIS Awards Now Open for 2026 Entries



Best of KBIS Awards Now Open for 2026 Entries.jpg

The Kitchen and Bath Industry Show (KBIS) has opened applications for the premier awards program, Best of KBIS, that will spotlight industry excellence in 2026.





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