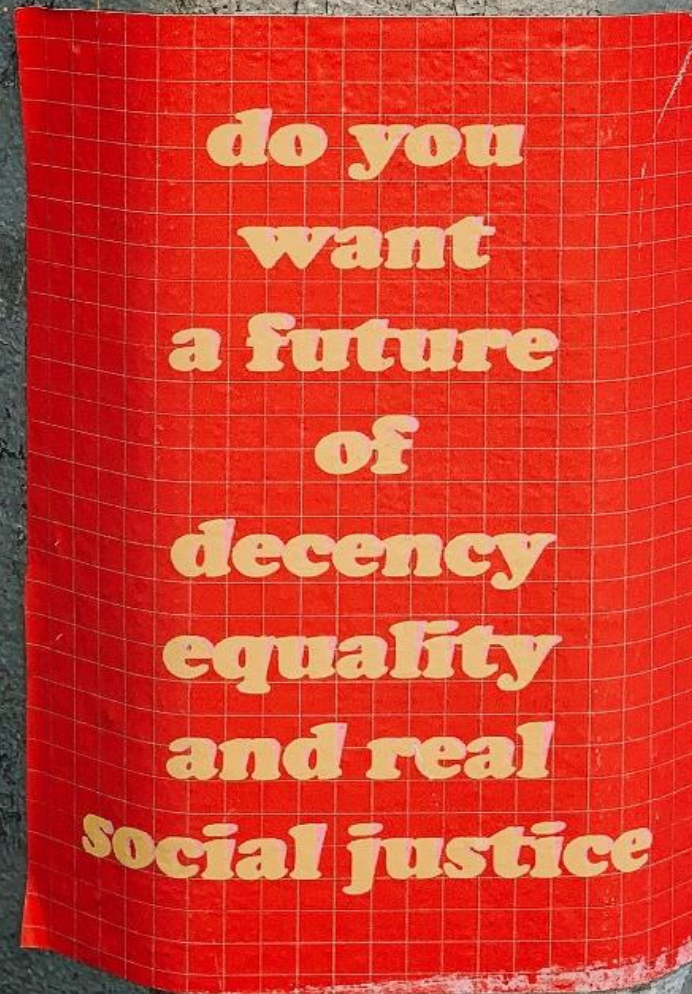


Design for All



Challenging the Boundaries of Design for All in a Challenged World

Guest editor: Steinar Valade-Amland, Tjeinsj by Three Point Zero

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Guest Editor:

Steinar Valade-Amland



Steinar is a market economist, and after more than 30 years of professional practice, he has accumulated extensive and valuable experience from a wide range of industries and managerial roles within marketing and sales, communication, PR and advocacy - leading to the design industry as an account director and later CEO of one of Denmark's leading brand design agencies, culminating in the role of spokesperson for the Danish design community as CEO of Danish Designers - parallel with holding numerous honorary positions.

His primary role today is helping organisations and management teams to establish the best possible baseline for business development and change processes - through stakeholder engagement and moderated processes, through organisational learning and co-creation. He claims to be rather agnostic when it

comes to models and methods, but design thinking and processes inspired by design methodologies are part of his DNA after 30 years in and closely connected to the industry.

He authored numerous articles and book contributions, amongst others with 15 articles to the Bloomsbury Encyclopaedia of Design, out in 2015. His latest book, "DESIGN: A BUSINESS CASE - Thinking, Leading, and Managing by Design" written together with Brigitte Borja de Mozota, is out in English and Korean, as well as in a "toolbox" version developed in collaboration with Hervé Collignon under the name "Strategic Design for a Responsible Future".

Challenging the boundaries of Design for All in a challenged world

Steinar Valade-Amland

Almost a decade has passed since leaders from 193 countries, at a historic UN summit, adopted a series of ambitious goals on behalf of the planet and humanity; the UN Sustainable Development Goals – also referred to as the SDGs. Seventeen overall ambitions, each relating to an area under pressure, and each one of them broken down into measurable targets – 169 in all – a gallery of assumingly attainable solutions to the most imminent challenges we face as a world community.

While our attention during the last decade has revolved around climate change, biodiversity and planetary health, reflected in five out of the seventeen goals, the remaining twelve goals are all human-centered – whether on an individual or communal level. In parallel with the SDG’s focus on the physical, mental and social needs of human beings, and during the same space of time, some of the same issues – however not new in themselves – have been framed in a concept, often referred to as DE&I – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This framework has – in particular - captured an important role in policymaking and management circles.

While applauding such a massive attention to the gaps between our desires for a world, where all human beings have their most basic needs fulfilled – material as well as emotional, and where their rights and their dignity are guarded, the most recent report from the UN

shows that aspirations and massive investments in communication, are not enough. The report clearly states that halfway to the deadline for the 2030 Agenda – and despite the “tagline” for the Sustainable Development Goals being “*Leaving no-one behind*”, we actually leave more than half the world behind. While celebrating progress on some of the targets, the progress related to more than 50 per cent of the targets is weak and insufficient. As a matter of fact, for almost as many targets where progress has been seen, the reality is that progress has actually stalled or gone into reverse. These include key targets on poverty, hunger and *climate*. The report triggered the UN Secretary general to conclude that “Unless we act now, the 2030 Agenda could become an epitaph for *a world that might have been*,” adding that what the world needs, right here and right now is a “*Rescue Plan for People and Planet*.”

In Europe, the cultural and creative sectors are comprised of all sectors whose activities are based on cultural values, or on artistic or creative expressions - individual or collective - as defined in the legal basis of the Creative Europe Programme. The cultural and creative industries (CCIs) ecosystem, covering the audiovisual, cultural and creative sectors, represents close to 4% of EU value creation (about the same as the energy sector) and employs around 8 million people (more than agriculture, forestry and fishing combined), including around 1.2 million firms, over 99.9% of which are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Design is one of these professional disciplines, and one of the most obvious levers in the pursuit of better lives and a better world. “In the design of new processes, products and services, we often design for ‘preferred behavior’. Application areas are manifold, varying from healthy living and de-escalating aggressive behavior, to airports and

shopping malls. Based on the existing and growing evidence about effective interventions, the potential for creative industries is both relevant and substantial.” Cultural and creative activities, and in particular design, can support this change of behaviour, as well as the transition to a green economy by promoting sustainability and environmental awareness, and by promoting sustainable means of transport and environmentally responsible behaviour. Moreover, research shows that 80% of the environmental impact of physical products is decided in the design phase. Clever design and production decisions optimizing how much material is needed, a products durability and its after-life, all with huge impact on its footprint and energy efficiency. Through the introduction of New European Bauhaus, the EU and its presidency has – more overtly and formally than ever before – appointed the creative industries and its legacy, based on ingenuity and cross-disciplinarity, to play a central role in reaching Europe’s sustainability goals;

- as a bridge between the world of science and technology, art and culture

- as a means to leverage our green and digital challenges to transform our lives for the better

- as an invitation to address complex societal problems together through co-creation

By creating bridges between different backgrounds, cutting across disciplines and building on participation at all levels, the New European Bauhaus inspires a movement to facilitate and steer the transformation of our societies along three inseparable values:

- ***sustainability, from climate goals to circularity, zero pollution, and biodiversity***
- ***aesthetics, quality of experience and style beyond functionality***
- ***inclusion, from valuing diversity to securing accessibility and affordability***

If we truly believe that design thinking is an invaluable source of insight, inspiration and empowerment, while design management is an equally valuable key to enabling great solutions, and design is a means to embody such solutions intelligently; then New European Bauhaus is not only a mandate, but an obligation to mobilize.

However, there are several stumbling blocks, and not everyone sees the same potential in the creative industries. Historically, creative professionals and artists have been undervalued and under-exploited both in business and vis-a-vis political processes, social and environmental challenges, and in the context of systemic change - despite overwhelming evidence that the creative industries make up a cornerstone in the developed world's economies. Until now, what the creative industries represent, has more often been used as "spice and glamour" than as a serious and potentially powerful tool for change. And - while the UN Sustainable Development Goals are being shamelessly ridden by companies as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations all over the world - the creative communities have until now failed to effectively respond to the call for action that the SDG's are.

An imminent challenge, thus, is to bridge the abundance of resources present and available in the creative sectors, namely design in particular, with the unresolved gaps between the sustainable

development goals and the harsh and brutal realities that people all over the world have to cope with on a daily basis.

Out of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, “only” five – without diminishing their importance – are aimed at planetary issues, our physical environments or our exploitation of same; sustainable cities and environments (11), responsible consumption and production (12), climate action (13), life below water (14) and life on land (15). Two of the goals are organisational, as peace, justice and strong institutions, (16) and partnerships for the goals (17). And the rest – 10 out of 17 – are aimed directly at solving challenges related to the quality of life and the living conditions of individuals; of creating a world, where all its individual habitants experience an acceptable and fair level related to diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as the sufficient affluence, courage, happiness and dignity to be able to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. Purpose for all requires design for all.

Design for all has often been framed as – or rather, perhaps, limited to – a means to secure equal rights and equal access to built environments, products and services, indifferent of age, physical or mental stature and related capabilities. Could the reason for this rather restrictive scope of the concept be a one-to-one reflection of how design was framed for decades, as giving form and shape and functionality to physical objects? One might admit that within such a paradigm, the historical take on design for all makes all kinds of sense. However, over the last three decades, design has widened its scope significantly, encompassing services and experiences, systems and organizations, spanning physical as well as digital environments, serving private, public and third sectors alike, and increasingly latching up onto environmental, social and political agendas. With such a fundamental change in what design is – for whom and to which

ends – the question is whether we can – and whether we can afford to – hold on to design for all’s historical and somewhat anachronistic confines.

Hence, in this issue of Design for All Magazine, the perimeters of “all” are extended to encompass human needs across the entire scope, as addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals – as well as the possible barriers acknowledged to hinder their achievement. Those might be individual, communal and societal, economical, legislative or political, or merely based on faith or tradition. At least in spirit, we will address poverty (1), hunger (2), health and well-being (3), education (4), gender equality (5), access to clean water and sanitation (6), affordable and clean energy (7), decent work and economic growth (8), innovation and infrastructure (9), and reduced inequalities – no matter for which reason, and regardless of possible controversies related to their solution (10).

Moreover, as the planetary issues referred to earlier, are intimately intertwined with human existence and to the degree of free choice to pursue our human needs in the future, we generously also include the search for viable solutions to those as a precondition to discuss design for all in a meaningful and contemporary fashion. Whether this will have any bearing on the way in which we discuss design for all going forward or not remains to be seen, but for here and now – please accept this as a point of departure for the reflections to which you will be exposed in this issue of Design for All Magazine.

Design for all is simply good design

In an earlier contribution to this chronicle, I claimed that Design for All is simply good design, advocating to “embrace the idea that Design for All is merely good design, and ride on the global wave of

campaigns, pondering into the minds of this world's business leaders that good design is good business. Let us substantiate that Design for All is obviously the right path to follow - also in a shareholder value perspective." I am still convinced that Design for All is the most responsible approach to designing. However, I seem to have overestimated the extent to which extent this would resonate among business leaders.

The truth, though, probably is that sustainable design – and design for all, for that matter – would have had a really rough time surviving if it weren't because a few global community organisations like World Health Organization and the United Nations, NGOs like the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, individuals like Helen Hamley – and Ursula van der Leyen, for that matter – and forward-looking corporations like Patagonia and Interface, had latched their own agendas up onto design as a vehicle. With their help, though, and combined with the inherent urge among designers to do good, the design community's need to justify their own existence, and, perhaps not least, people around the world with great ideas and points of departure, who would earlier not have been heard, but who suddenly were able to enrich the conversation as a direct consequence of the access to wide audiences provided by social media – design as a life raft and a force for good has prevailed.

The job, though, isn't even half done yet.

SDG 1: Almost 700 million people still live in extreme poverty

SDG 2: Almost 800 million people are facing chronic hunger

SDG 3: 99% of the world population live in and breath unhealthy air, and almost 40% are obese

SDG 4: Close to 250 million kids between the ages of 6 and 18 have no school to go to

SDG 5: At the current rate, it will take over 140 years to reach gender parity in managerial positions

SDG 6: Over 2 billion people lack safe drinking water and 3.5 billion people lack safe sanitation

SDG 7: Around 675 million people lack electricity and 2 billion rely on inefficient and polluting cooking systems

SDG 8: Twice as many young women are of education, employment or training, as young men

SDG 9: CO2 emissions from energy combustion and industrial processes keep growing

SDG 10: One in six has experienced discrimination due to gender, marital status, race or ethnicity, age, religion or political views.

The design community faces – together with the rest of those of us who have the means and capabilities, as well as the appropriate vehicles, to make a difference – a historical opportunity to prove its unique capacity and its power to foster change. And, as a community, it has accepted this challenge – as expressed in the Montreal Design Declaration from 2017, where 22 international organisations representing professional urban planners, architects, landscape architects and designers from over 90 countries united in a pledge, which encapsulates the very idea of Design for All:

***Cognisant* of the diverse range of contexts, both formal and informal, where design has an impact;**

***Mindful* of the immeasurable value of local and traditional knowledge for appropriate and innovative design solutions;**

***Sentient* of the demand of communities, large or small, local or global, for decent living conditions and which design can help address;**

***In recognition* of the need for strategic leadership on design matters at local, regional, national and international levels and with this, the need for governance models, political agendas and policy to take design into account;**

***In recognition* of the need for sufficient fiscal and human resources and capacity;**

***Acknowledging* the intrinsic capacity of design to serve as an agent of change and a source of creative transformation;**

***Acknowledging* the fundamental and critical role of design to create a world that is environmentally sustainable, economically viable, socially equitable, and culturally diverse; and**

***Confirming* the value of working in a collaborative, holistic and integrated way to foster design of common benefit.**

To contribute to casting some light over this extended take on Design for All, I have encouraged a handful of extremely dedicated scholars and practitioners to contemplate on how a better designed and more inclusive – hence also a more sustainable – future can be achieved through the endeavours of design professionals.

Dragan Calovic holds a PhD in Art Science from University of Arts in Belgrade and is currently a Full Professor at the Faculty of Contemporary Arts and at the Faculty of Philology at University of Arts

in Belgrade. He teaches – amongst other – Contemporary Theories of Art and Design. In his article, he discusses design for all as a component of democracy-based design, while stressing the importance of the empathic sublime to safeguard the values, represented by design, which are not purely utilitarian.

Dorrit Bøilerehaug, who holds a PhD in Online Fashion Communication from Aarhus University, is currently assistant professor at University of Aarhus, besides being an age advocate and founder of the Silver Starter Initiative, author, influencer and a sought-after model. In her article, she discusses the perception of age and how we judge the book by the cover - or rather individuals by their skin.

Brussels-based Rozina Spinnoy holds a BSc (Hons) in Interior Design from Glasgow Caledonian University and is currently Founding Director of BIDs Belgium and Managing Director of Belgium Design Council. As a designer, social entrepreneur and thought leader, and with a particular focus on accessibility and inclusion in urban environments, catering for citizens with mental or neurodiversity challenges, she addresses the need to strengthen the representation of minorities and underrepresented groups among design scholars and practitioners, if we truly want to pursue Design for All as a fundamental design principle.

Copenhagen based Sarah Lund Morrison holds an MA in Communication and Psychology from Roskilde University and an MSc in Service Systems Design from Aalborg University. Practicing as change and innovation practitioner through her own company SLUM.nu, her article focuses on the role of visual thinking and creative leadership to foster inclusion and diversity.

Founding Director of Institute of Advanced Design Studies, ADES, based in Hungary, Karina Vissonova holds a PhD in Philosophy of Design from Royal Academy of the Arts in Copenhagen. She challenges our level of ambition and calls for a quiet shift from design thinking to design dreaming.

With gratitude for the contributors' time and dedication, I proudly introduce a series of bold and – possibly – more timely perspectives on Design for All

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