

Foreword

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In recent decades, designers have been increasingly called upon to embody qualities such as sensitivity, empathy, and humility in their practice. This shift underscores the profound responsibility designers bear in addressing societal needs and navigating complex global issues. Design, as a discipline, has historically demonstrated responsiveness to societal developments and crises. However, amidst the multifaceted challenges of our times, there is a growing discourse surrounding the potential for design to not only react but also serve as a catalyst for transformative change. This discourse raises pivotal questions about the role of design in fostering hope, generating realistic solutions, and mitigating global and local crises.

As the world grapples with various crises, including conflicts and environmental disruptions, the role of the designer becomes increasingly nuanced and complex.

Drawing upon interdisciplinary perspectives and empirical research, as well as case studies, authors of this conference proceedings critically examine the evolving role of designers in responding to contemporary crises. Sharing case studies, interrogating the intersections of design with social, political, and environmental issues, authors aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of design as well as its limits in navigating the challenges of the 21st century.

Global warming, loss of biodiversity, droughts, famine, war, populism, a global pandemic, political polarization, economic crisis, inflation, rising inequalities, and eroding educational systems: Current and anticipated crises, resulting from what is called 'development', are fundamentally shifting and reshaping our being in the world on many levels (global/local, micro/macro, social/individual, etc.) and the ways they are dealt with have been marked by a profound insensitivity to the environment as well as a callous disregard for humankind. In various forms, these crises have rendered illusions of stability about political order, economy, and ideas of progress obsolete. They have also perpetuated and frequently escalated the divisions within and between populations, socio-economic classes, and communities. Formal political structures of our time seem to be limited in their capabilities to confront the entanglement of crises on their own.

Design, as a discipline, responds to current developments, reflects upon and reacts to past and current crises. Can design bring much-needed, fundamental

changes? How might design stand out in relief as a sign of hope? How can it lead to the emergence of realistic solutions and usher positive change on the global and local scale? And more importantly what are the pathways that could potentially lead to these common futures? How can we intervene to address the growing numbers of various planetary disruptions? The Social Design Network Conference looked into these pressing questions. This edited volume presents the work of authors who presented them during this conference in November 2023 at Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest (MOME).

The Social Design Network (SDN) was founded in 2020 by Bori Fehér and Jonatan Ventura with the aim of bringing social design educators, researchers and practitioners closer to combat the complex, multifaceted challenges we have in front of us. Since its inception the SDN has been organising various events. Their inaugural symposium took place at MOME in 2020, followed by a conference in Jerusalem in 2022. Since then the SDN has launched various other projects and initiatives, and most importantly, built relationships and created space for knowledge exchange to combat isolation and initiate positive change. The SDN is currently a voluntary organisation where the aim is to bring people together from around the world to discuss pressing topics and also to act and initiate change together. The goal of the SDN is to create a space for knowledge sharing and combat isolation, thereby fostering collaboration and innovation within the community of social design educators, researchers and practitioners. Over the years, members of the SDN collaborated on research topics dealing with the intersection of design and opportunities for displaced communities, and currently it tackles the question of inter-institutional collaborations between higher design/art education and the non-profit sector by developing methodological recommendations for future change agents. The conference concept originated from the initiative's desire to facilitate closer interactions among knowledge experts and provide a platform for exchanging ideas. It is the intention of the SDN to organise conferences like this every two years at various locations related to members of the Network.

This conference in Budapest was organised by the SDN in collaboration with the Social Design Hub at MOME Innovation Center, which is the social design focused research unit of the university. The Social Design Hub focuses on issues of social change and develops innovative, practice-based design research. Its aim is to generate new knowledge, serve as a knowledge center and support related activities around MOME. The Hub seeks solutions to decrease inequality and foster resilience for all.

The conference was developed by a committee that was created through a voluntary application process within the Social Design Network.

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