

Editorial Introduction

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"Give design back to society and it will be an ability sought after in the soon to be realised post-mining economy with numerous regulations that will make the everyday task complex and challenging. From material to dematerial [sic] is a direction that design will increasingly focus on as business models and regulatory principles will determine what we may be permitted to do rather than what we can do with technology at hand. Design is about what you can and would do with technology and materials as well as about the spirit that drives such use. People matter and designing with people and for people is the way forward which we will need to once again integrate into our everyday lives." (MP Ranjan, 2006).

The 2021 Swiss Design Network Conference was held under the constraints and challenges of a global human crisis. Today, design is an ability sought after in private business and industry, though increasingly in the public sector. In both sectors, design has the potential to contribute to the common good: by way of making services accessible, business models social and sustainable, by way of opening new paths for outcomes that benefit individual people, producers, the public and the planet. Waheed Hussein (2018) defined the 'Common Good' to be that which "benefits society as a whole – in contrast to the private good of individuals and sections of society." This definition, published in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed. Zalta et al., 2018) can be interpreted as a call to design for the many, not for the one. Does this call for a shift from, say, user-centered design which concerns itself with one-to-one relationships to human-centered design, which understands the one to be part of a wider community or society (Winnograd and Wood, 1997; Buchanan, 2001; Krippendorff, 2006)? What does it mean then for design to act, intervene and engage with often highly fragmented and politicized communities – be that at a local, national or global level? How, in what way and for what purpose do we find design to make valuable contributions to policies, the economies, and societies? And how might design be part of a public strategy to mobilize power and knowledge for the common good (Mulgan, 2009)? More puzzling, if we do think of design itself as a common good, is this a call for caring about design in different ways than we do currently?

The late MP Ranjan prepared his remarks for the 2006 conference of the Industrial Design Society of America (IDSA) but we find many elements that are part of our contemporary debates about 'design as common good'. In fact, the concern for consequences and impact of our design thinking and design doing is a theme throughout design" history. Long before the virus disrupted every part and corner of our lives, in communities around the globe, design researchers and design practitioners concerned themselves with questions of the social and the common good. This includes Päivi Tahkokallio's and Susan Vihma's edited book *Design – Pleasure or Responsibility?* (1995) as well as Bruce Mau's and J. Leonard's 2004 compilation on *Massive Change that was* based on the exhibit with the same title in the same year.

The focus has moved though, from scrutinizing design products and things for their value to the real world (Papanek, 1972) to closing the chasm between designing for the (consumer) market and the nonprofit, public sector (Margolin and Margolin, 2002). Margolin and Margolin's proposed 'Social Model' outlines the shared interests in the social and the market that resonate with contemporary concepts of social business and social entrepreneurship, or as Csikszentmihalyi (2004) writes, with "good business." New design professions have emerged that are explicit in their concern for societal and social impact. These include Service Design and Social De-

sign with new specializations now forming around Design in Government, Legal Design and even Policy Design. The uproar caused by the UK Design Council just fifteen years ago when it awarded its own in-house designer Hilary Codham, a designer who 'explored new solutions to social and economic problems through design' but was "no shaper of 'things'", is unthinkable today[1].

Instead, we find design central to a number of governmental frameworks. Among them, for example, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by the UN and the Quadruple Helix by the OECD (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009)[2]. The SDG calls for new approaches of design to address 17 areas identified by the UN as elements of a sustainable world concerned with human well-being. In this framework, design refers and is understood as transcending the verb to design meaning creation of products, services, buildings or communication and so on, rather looking at design as "diverse forms of life, and often, contrasting notions of sociability and the world" (Escobar, 2018). Each of the 17 boxes point to the need of a new approach to an old lingering problem. It is not for lack of experts that each of these boxes have struggled to arrive at satisfying solutions, it is for lack of getting people motivated and encouraged enough to work together in new ways and to experiment together, co-developing and co-designing new possibilities. The second example, the Quadruple Helix, emphasizes the need for co-creation and co-design among governments, industries, academia and civil society in order to achieve socially desirable innovations. It is here where design as common good encounters pluralism and social values. A recently published report part of the EU initiative "We against the Virus" (WirvsVirus) underlines the fundamental need for co-creation, and codesign to achieve viable social innovation. Does this point to design being a common good?

In light of these promising but also fundamental shifts in business, society and government, the contributions of design to the common good remain under explored. This conference aims to reflect[3] critically on the implications, approaches, practices and challenges involved for design researchers, design professionals and other design practitioners participating when they engage in the creation of 'a' or 'the' common good. When everybody designs (Manzini, 2015) and design is recognized for its ubiquitousness, does this make design a common good? And if so, what are the consequences?

[1] Source: Jinman, Richard, 'Design Award Winner no shaper of 'things'', The Guardian Online, June 10th 2005. Last accessed March 2021: www.theguardian.com/society/2005/jun/10/urbandesign.architecture.

[2] Source: www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org.

[3] Source: Open Social Innovation: Gemeinsam Lernen aus #WirvsVirus, A Learning Report DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48462/OPUS4-3782>. The Hertie School

Temporality presents a key aspect for designers today (Anceschi and Botta, 2019) with a focus on processes over time. We witness this in the contemporary design language that now shapes the field of design. New terminological compounds around design topics, approaches, and processes have emerged, such as strategic design, transition design, transformative design, experience design; and co-design participatory design, Human-Centered Design; and again, collaborative thinking, iterative processes, and product life cycle. These terminological compounds identify theories, methods, and practices formulated and established in other contexts of knowledge, and are now part of the design discipline. With an openness to change and the adoption of theories, methods, and practices from other sciences, defining one's intellectual, cultural, social, and political dimension became increasingly relevant for the discipline of design and the designer role.

This last viewpoint is of fundamental importance when considered with the topic of the common good. Aristotle refers to "politics" as the administration of the "polis" for the good of all, as the determination of a public space in which all citizens participate. And politics implies the term *téchnē*, which is the art and technique of the government of society. In other words, today's design should present itself as the technical-scientific discipline which, increasingly, contributes to defining the rules and principles that designate the directions that public life should take.

1 A Working Conference: About the Pre-Conference Working Groups

Critique about design conferences has been lingering for years, if not decades. Too expensive, too stoic, too weak in terms of papers, too colonized in terms of those driving the program and the conference structure. The analogue world witnessed a rise in "unconferences". These seem to have potential but so far they have shown to have at least two issues: one concern is that they seem to work for small groups only – and here, too the question of who is in and who is out remains. Another concern is their integration into the field and discipline, that is to ensure the knowledge and insights produced are accessible to the field. For now at least, unconferences have not proven to be a sufficient answer. The shift to the digital realm has challenged us to rethink the purpose of a design research conference. It also raises the specific question of how we might mobilize power and knowledge for the common good through a conference. We have approached this question with an experimental working conference we hoped would provide opportunities for real - human - exchange and engagement while encouraging critical reviews of ideas and concepts that have the potential to lead to new collaborations and new networks within the research community that can be pursued after the conference.

1.1 A Working Conference

The moment we began to discuss if we wanted to accept the invitation to co-chair the Swiss Design Network Conference 2021, we wondered what a design research conference could add in

times of upheaval, anxiety and for most of us, double and triple workloads. We discussed expectations, minimum requirements (conference proceedings!) and before we knew it we were asking ourselves what is the greater good here? What is the added value? Why should we or anyone else invest time in this? It was at that point when we realized that the conference itself needed to take the form of a work in progress following a co-design process. Figure 1 shows the concept drawn on the back of an envelope: following a double blind abstract review, authors worked on their paper. They then were assigned into working groups by the conference chairs according to areas of interests we saw emerging. The pre-conference began in the middle of December but work really picked up in mid-January. What happened in this working conference is that the actual conference taking place on March 25th and 26th turned out to be the byproduct of a much longer and more intense process.

1.2 Co-Developing the Conference Program

Following the acceptance of abstracts, authors were asked to finish their papers. Next we opened slack working groups around the themes and topics we saw emerging and brought together authors who looked at a similar or related topic from different perspectives. In a next step, we asked each group to envision and develop their conference session. By that time most authors had their paper close to being final and were ready to present and discuss this within their group. We gave each group the task to find out what was common about their papers and to build a panel session of 90 minutes around this. We encouraged groups to go beyond classic paper presentations. In the end, we asked every panel (and workshop) group to come up with a title and description for their panel. The conference program for both days is the result of this work. Sadly, the incredible amount of work accomplished on Slack will not be visible to attendees of the culmination of this conference that is open to the public. At the height of the activity, 168 people were working together on slack, crossing all time zones from Australia to Austria, Brazil to Bath, India to Istanbul. They started on December 15th and worked together through the end of March.

What we found is that many co-authors were engaging fully in these working groups. For us as conference chairs, for the conference coordinators for the Swiss Design Network Mayar el Hawayan and for SUPSI, Vanessa De Luca, this meant a much more direct engagement with individual conference contributors. Together with our authors and workshop hosts, we embraced different kinds of human experiences and different kinds of human interactions with the design research community.

1.3 Pushing the Envelope or Succumbing to Norms?

As designers, one would think that we are eager to push boundaries and experiment with new ways to engage with each other to advance knowledge and insights. Alas, we find that we are human, too. The reality is that when it comes to conferences, we

prefer the convenience of unwritten scripts and formulae. Tell me what the topic is I shall write about, tell me when to show up for my paper presentation, and please provide the ISBN of the proceedings so I can add this to my CV is an understandable position given the workload most of us face. A workload that has come under additional strains during the Corona pandemic. It is all but impressive therefore what every author for this conference and every single person involved in any of the conference workshops has accomplished.

1.4 Digital Tools for Ongoing Communication

To make matters worse for many involved, a digital conference requires working with digital tools not everyone likes or is familiar with. We found that a good number of our authors and hosts were fairly new to slack and encountered a first learning curve. Most managed marvelously, others simply turned to email as their preferred means of communication. Zoom and other video conferencing tools were also heavily relied on throughout the pre-conference work. What we learned was that people want to work together and that the digital realm offers many different paths and avenues to locate a usable and useful workspace. Figure 1 shows a screenshot of the *Slack* channels shortly before the start of the conference.

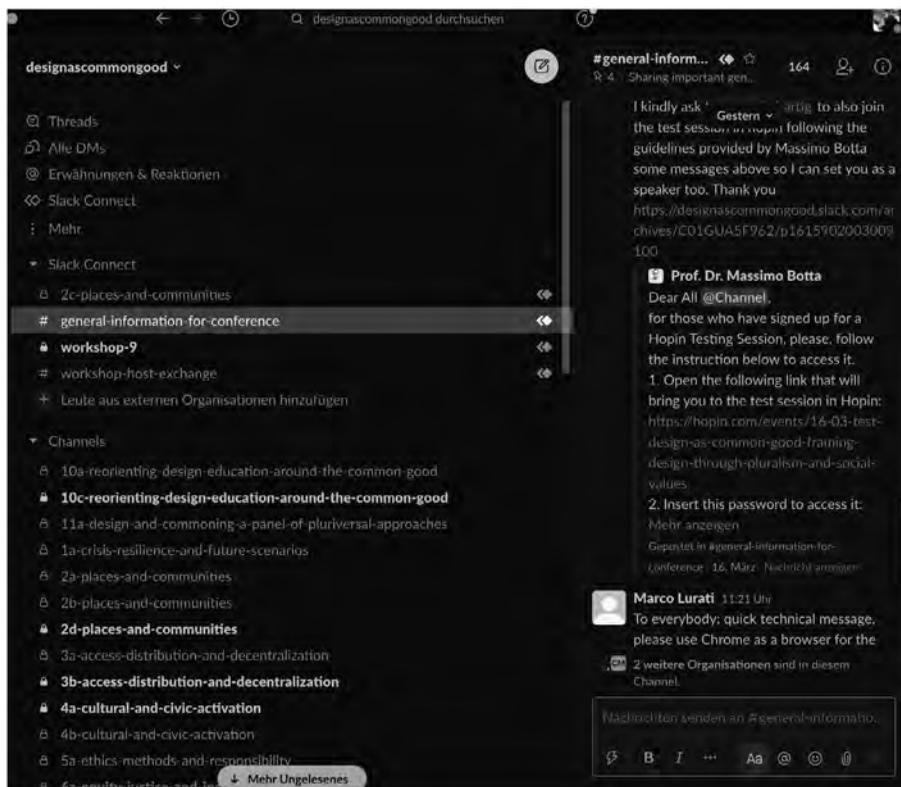


Fig. 1: Screenshot Slack Communication March 18th 2021 (Junginger).

1.5 Technical Support Sessions

Much thought was given to the conference platform. We eventually decided on *Hopin*, knowing full well that this would impose yet another learning curve on our contributors. Many had requested we stay on Zoom, a tool they were by now veerey familiar with and knew their way around. For the conference, we needed a place in cyberspace where everyone could check in at any point in time and move around freely between sessions. After much exploration, we zoomed in (pun intended!) on Hopin. We organized tech support sessions for all interested contributors to familiarize them and to enable them to run their own *Hopin* event. We are fully conscious that a platform like Hopin has its limitations and will disappoint some while delighting others. A judgement on the appropriateness of the platform for our conference will be possible only after the event has run its course, which will be only after the finalization of these proceedings.

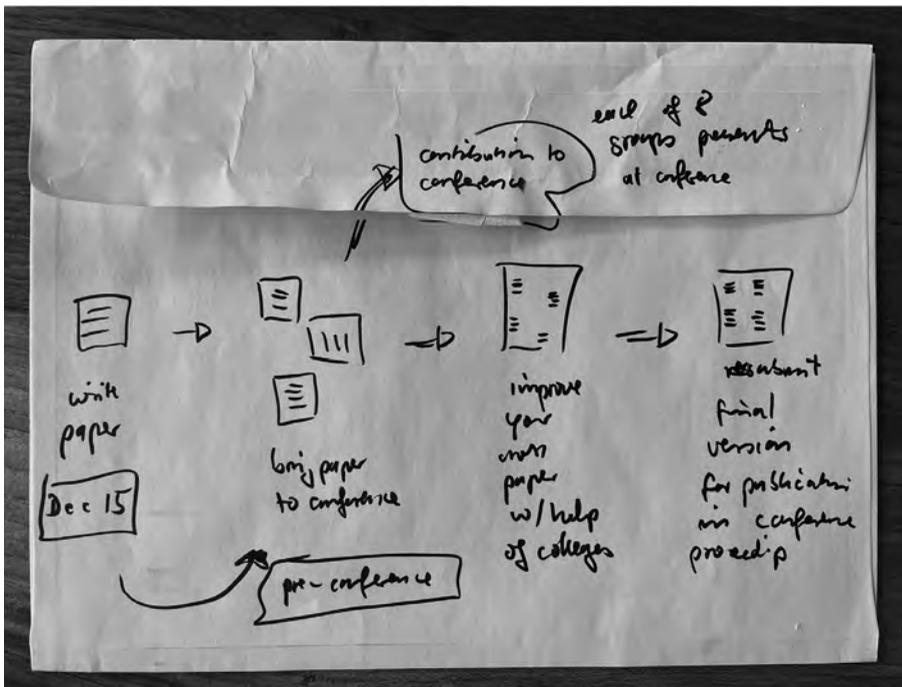
1.6 Time Zones & Cultural Diversity

An analogue conference brings together people, many of whom show signs of jetlag as they have traveled through different time zones to meet in the assigned location. For a digital working conference, time differences pose new challenges over a prolonged period of time. In our case, contributors dealt with these complications from mid-December through the end of March. Fewer than five contributors 'were lost' in this process, which is an encouraging sign. Being aware of this added complication, each panel and workshop group was asked to identify a time window that would work for them. The resulting three time slots reflect these wishes but there are still individual contributors for whom the conference means a 5 am start in the day or a 9 pm session.

There was a notable rise in awareness of power dynamics ranging from concepts of decolonialization, queer literature and gender perspectives. As we have been able to witness in other conferences, there is a broader concern about eurocentricity and western cultural norms^[4]. This inspired us to think of the digital conference hang out places in terms of different cultures. We invite you to meet in a middle-eastern Shisha lounge, or relax in an Asian tea house, perhaps move to the beer garden or visit the juice bar before settling down in the wine cellar.

^[4] A conversation and debate reignited also by the current developments around a New European Bauhaus.

Fig. 2: Conference Sketch November 2020 (Junginger).



2 About the Structure of the Proceedings

For the conference proceedings, we identified yet another set of themes that emerged from the panels and workshops. Though one might argue that there are alternative ways to go about this, we found four themes of particular salience. These include papers that offer 1) reflections on the Common Good, 2) papers that focus on how we get to the common good (Striving for the Common Good), 3) papers for how to advance design education about and for the common good (Educating for the Common Good) and finally, 4) the workshops provide examples of Designing for the Common Good.

2.1 Reflections on the Common Good

There are a wide range of efforts underway to engage with the questions this conference has pointedly asked but few look outside of design, perhaps missing opportunities to understand the role of (human-centered?) design in a pluralistic democratic society. This has already led to a number of publications by scholars in public management (McGann et al, 2018; Lewis et al, 2020) where authors often give short shrift to design literature and design research, conveniently reducing design to either a method (design thinking) or a profession (service design). We rarely find fundamental discussions of what it is that constitutes a specific design approach relevant to their field. This gap is significant as it is difficult to change the way one is going about designing when one is either not prepared or not willing to reflect on practices in play. Little to no systemic impact can be anticipated here.

2.2 Striving for the Common Good

The conference participants represent a self selection of actors who were attracted by the conference theme. This makes any comment on the theme "striving for the common good" a biased undertaking. Nonetheless the papers part of this section of the conference proceedings illustrate the breadth and the depths these efforts are now covering. The challenge for design has always been to retain a critical distance and not simply to be proud of its accomplishments - or to complain about others when things do not turn out the way we like it. What this section shows is that there is plenty of material for design researchers to develop new theoretical constructs that could inform the work going on in other disciplines and other domains.

2.3 Educating for the Common Good

The theme of Educating for the Common Good demonstrates that a reorientation of design education is underway. This includes the revision of the curricula structure towards more systemic thinking, the adoption of participatory methodologies and more holistic approaches to support specific interest groups and communities. At the same time, we are witnessing the introduction of educational models, theories, and practices that place design in the context of social, gender, and race inequalities that still exist in society and institutions with a broader discussion challenging the contribution and the role of the designer according to the topic of the common good.

2.4 Designing for the Common Good

Finally, the conference workshops have provided some inspiring examples but also have shown us the limits of organizing a conference online with a bare minimum of staff. One particularly interesting workshop we would have liked to see required us to be able to provide access to participants weeks in advance. In this case, our ambition met with the reality of how people sign up for a conference (last minute) and that despite our very personal engagement with all contributors throughout the planning, there were some things we just could not deliver on.

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Acknowledgements

Any conference is a team effort but often the team is reduced to the conference chairs, the conference organizers and the tech team in the background. In our case, our team included Conference Coordinator for the Swiss Design Network, Mayar el Hawayan and Vanessa De Luca and Silvia Converso, Marco Lurati, Daniele Murgia, Giovanni Profeta, Francesca Somaini and Claudia Tambella from SUPSI. Without either one of them, this conference would not have been unthinkable to lift off the ground. The demands on the team from setting up Slack channels and maintaining ongoing communication with authors and workshop hosts over several months to setting up the website, building the program bottom up and finally, seeing through the concept and realization of these conference proceedings were a load all on their own. Identifying a proper conference platform, tailoring it to our needs and then providing technical onboarding sessions for all panel and workshop hosts, too, added to the hours. A very big thank you indeed to the internal team. There is the Swiss Design Network Board which has trusted us with running this conference in an unconventional way, the great support we have received from SUPSI and HSLU, especially from Vice Dean of Research, Martin Wiedmer.

This conference stands out for the demands it has put on those selected to present their papers and run their workshops. We have asked you to make this your conference, to participate actively in the development of individual panels and the overall conference program. We are so grateful to all of you, across the globe who have supported this exploratory and experimental approach to how an online conference could bring together people, lead to new connections and new insights not only about how we think of a conference but also of designing together. Even now we find the slack channels still being used actively. This indicates that we all have created something of value together. We hope you can cherish this accomplishment with us and extend a big and heartfelt

Thank you!