

Christina Hedin, Sophie Kauper, Karl Stocker (Eds.)

Lessons On Change

15 Creative Minds
Share Their Stories

Table Of Contents

4–9

Lessons On Change. An Introduction

Christina Hedin, Sophie Kauper, Karl Stocker

10–25

Designers Can Show What Positive Change Looks Like

Stuart Walker

26–37

Creating A Design Manual

Lilián González-González

38–53

Swimming In A River Of Change

Gunnar Rundgren

54–65

Art As Tool For Emancipation

Stella Rollig

66–77

Design And Complexity

Pier Paolo Peruccio

78–97

Detroit—Invisibility In The Magnificent City

Marsha Music

98–105

Film Can Say Everything At Once

Lukáš Berberich

106–129

**Creating Something New Because There
Is No Solution**

Barbara Meyer

130–141

Does Fear Stand In The Way Of Change?

Ola Fransson

142–157

We Need To Ask The Right Questions

Julia Kloiber

158–169

Commuter In A Communicating World

Andy Kaltenbrunner

170–181

**Empowering Change Through Design
Education**

Sigrid Bürstmayr, Bettina Gjecaj

182–193

Curiosity And Creativity

John Howkins

194–203

Youth Involvement As A Catalyst For Change

Carlotta Beghi

Words by

Christina Hedin, Sophie Kauper, Karl Stocker

Lessons On Change.

An Introduction

The world is changing rapidly. Some of these changes improve our lives, for example we can use our phones to read the news or communicate with friends and family. Now, we do not have to wait weeks for a letter to arrive. Far too quickly, we tend to get used to the fast pace of our constantly developing environment and the never-ending stream of innovative technology. Tech that had just been introduced is soon destined for oblivion.

Always being told about the great advantages of this fast-paced development, and growing up regarding our world as this remarkable and unique place, one might wonder what fuels ongoing wars, why do we exceed our planetary boundaries and

how is it possible that poverty is still an issue in almost every country to this day, despite millions of people overcoming financial hardship.

These are all alarming reports that, ideally, we should not have to deal with anymore given our economic, social, and technological advancements in recent years. Many of these problems have been forgotten about, mostly because the media in the Global North has never put a focus on them. The conflict in the Congo and women struggling in Afghanistan are all still pretty real and happening as we speak. Not many people are aware of the current situation in high-risk areas that are not cutting the front page anymore.

Climate change The evidence for climate change is overwhelming. All around the globe, we can already see its consequences, including flooding, fires, and other types of extreme climatic aberrations. Floods have become so common that many severe events are no longer reported globally. The effects of global warming are occurring much faster than scientists had predicted.

Despite this, we remain reluctant to transform society in a more sustainable way. A minority of companies and states actively try to stop the transition to a fossil-free world, persuading individuals, governments, and businesses to continue relying on non-renewable energy sources. The vast majority of countries and companies, however, acknowledge climate change but still fail to take significant action. The societal changes required to delay its progression are immense and must involve every facet.

The pandemic showed us that a quick change in society is possible. So why do we not respond to the climate crisis with the same urgency?

War In Sweden and other countries, the focus has shifted to military rearmament due to the war in Ukraine. The Swedish government wants to be prepared for a potential war and is allocating enormous amounts of money to militarization but neglects to invest a similar level of resources into addressing the climate crisis.

Rich and poor The world has been flooded by millionaires in pursuit of adventures involving fancy hotels, luxury yachts and private jets. “Existing products and practices are freely discarded in favor of the latest fashions, the most up-to-date devices. Such extravagant lifestyles expose the fact that we do not value material things; we value newness, and the environmental toll

is immense.” (Stuart Walker, *Design for Resilience: Making the Future We Leave Behind*, MIT Press 2023, p. 1).

Hunger and hardship However, the distribution of wealth seems to be a harder challenge to solve. We still have one billion people who go to bed hungry every night, while another billion struggle with obesity.

The future is digital It can no longer be overlooked—the future is digital. Between dystopian fear of technology and utopian enthusiasm for it, all kinds of imagination currently exist in public discourse, finding expression everywhere. Scientists, designers, and artists have begun analyzing, illustrating, and commenting on the prevailing dominance of bits and machines. They examine the profound changes currently reshaping our lives. Yet, even after millions of years of human life and evolution, we remain rooted in our sensory experiences—what we can feel, smell, see, and hear. (Kunstforum 265, Digital. Virtuuell. Posthuman?)

Hope In this world of crises, we also see determination—people who truly make a tremendous change and influence others, either on a personal level or in their workplaces. In moments of crisis or catastrophe, individuals extend support to others in generous ways.

We have the power The change that we need in society is driven by people—clever and brave individuals with a deep knowledge in their fields. People who see creativity as a tool for development and who gather others eager to join their mission. By working together, we can discover new ways to develop the world today.

To better understand the change required in this world, the editors of this book, Christina Hedin, and Karl Stocker,

invited some of the people in their network to write articles about change and how they have been working with development in their respective fields. Sophie Kauper, the third editor, together with Lauren Brooks, is responsible for the translations as well as the linguistic and editorial processing of the diverse texts.

The contributors The authors featured in this book live in different countries and are experts in various fields, but all of them have made a change in their respective domain. They have come up with innovative ideas and implemented them to a broader audience.

What they have in common is their awareness of the world's challenges. However, instead of succumbing to despair, they work consistently and humbly to improve the world with their own expertise.

Our book begins with Stuart Walker, who, in his interview *Designers Can Show What Positive Change Looks Like*, reflects on his career path. As a former engineer in the oil industry focused on maximum extraction, he later transitioned to art and design. Today, he works as a designer, university teacher, and author. What fascinated him most was the power of designers to envision a better future. Design can not only enrich aesthetically but also serve as a bridge to open people up to positive changes.

Lilián González-González, industrial designer and Academic Coordinator at the Anáhuac University of Mexico, describes in *Creating A Design Manual* the development of a guide aimed at equipping students and professionals to address complex social challenges and conflicts in marginalized contexts while fostering hope. The manual integrates insights from various fields of knowledge such as critical theory, philosophy, art, literature, linguistics, and other humanities

and social science areas to enable a design practice with transformative, symbolic, disruptive, and instituting power. The text concludes with a call to extend the principles of the manual beyond the academic realm to allow for broader application in professional and collaborative practices in social design.

Gunnar Rundgren tells his story in *Swimming In A River of Change*. He is one of the pioneers of organic agriculture in Sweden, and in the article, he describes how it all started on a self-sufficient collective farm. Over the years, the farm developed, leading to collaboration with other farmers and the establishment of the first organic marketing cooperative in Europe, which eventually resulted in the creation of organic certification in Sweden. After the development of the organic sector in Sweden, Gunnar continued to advance this movement in several other countries. The article also describes why Gunnar started to write books and it ends with his analysis on society today, including how capitalism can be harmful, how we see nature, and our obsession with setting goals.

Stella Rollig reflects in her interview titled *Art as Tool for Emancipation*, on her path to the world of art and her roles as a curator and, currently as the General Director of the Belvedere in Vienna. She emphasizes the importance of art as an instrument of emancipation and highlights the function of the museum in preserving and contextualizing cultural heritage. She discusses the current challenges for museums, including global orientation and sustainability. Lastly, she expresses optimism in light of the growing social awareness in the younger generation of museum professionals.

Pier Paolo Peruccio, Professor at the Politecnico di Milano, starts his text, *Design And Complexity*, by exploring the multifaceted nature of the term design,

acknowledging its diverse interpretations, and emphasizing its continuous and pervasive influence on our actions and decisions. Furthermore, the article delves into the concept of complexity, highlighting its interconnected and systemic nature, especially in addressing contemporary crises. It underlines the value of systems thinking in understanding the intricate relationships within systems and how this approach is instrumental in tackling complex issues. Finally, the article provides insight into the Archeology in Transit project, which uses artifacts as a key lens to understand migration intricacies, illustrating the significant role of design and research in addressing global issues.

Marsha Music, author and cultural historian, describes in *Detroit, The Magnificent City* her experiences and observations of Detroit's history, culture, and evolution. She shares her family's connection to the city, including her father's role as a record producer and their experiences in different neighborhoods. Marsha delineates the demographic shifts and the impact of urban renewal and various crises, such as the 1967 Rebellion and subsequent upheavals, on the city and her family. Moreover, she addresses the evolving social dynamics, economic changes, and the intersection of race and visibility in Detroit. Marsha emphasizes the need for a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of the city's history, culture, and the contributions of its Black residents. Overall, the text provides a comprehensive insight into the multifaceted history, challenges, and promising developments in Detroit, as observed and experienced by Marsha Music.

Lukáš Berberich's contribution *Film Can Say Everything At Once*, describes the activities of Kino Úsmev, which he leads, aiming to not only be a cinema but also a place for dialogue, diversity, and political

engagement. Lukáš sees his work as a contribution to change in society, with values such as inclusivity and openness playing a central role. Despite various challenges, such as inadequate financial support, positive feedback and international recognition of his project motivate him.

Barbara Meyer reflects in *Creating Something New Because There Is No Solution* on her diverse professional experiences and how she was influenced by her time in the mountain region of Switzerland and her work at the cultural center Schlesische27 in Berlin. Barbara expresses her views on the necessity of using artistic strategies in various social areas to promote transformations. Her commitment to creating an alternative educational landscape as well as the integrative work with refugees and migrants expresses her vision of a diverse and open society.

Ola Fransson reflects about change and our human nature in the article *Does Fear Stand In The Way of Change?* He asks why humanity remains inert, inactive, and unshaken despite being aware of today's insights about climate change, especially in the wake of an increasing number of environmental disasters. Is it possible to find answers by exploring our cultural heritage and traditional knowledge? Meeting all kinds of people in his line of work, he realized how differently nature is observed and perceived. To show these contrasts and variances, Ola curated an exhibition with thoughtful design elements to showcase the diverse perspectives. By understanding and acknowledging these varying views of nature, Ola believes we can initiate a crucial conversation about where we stand and where we are going.

Julia Kloiber's interview titled *We Need To Ask The Right Questions* explores her personal journey, professional development, and current sociopolitical engagement, particularly in the context

of digitalization through her work with the non-profit organization SUPERRR Lab. She emphasizes the importance of collaboration, networking, and fostering open dialogues to drive social and political change. The interview also discusses specific projects focused on improving working conditions for content moderators and researching human rights violations in the digital supply chain.

Andy Kaltenbrunner, university lecturer, journalist, and founder of the Medienhaus Wien, explains his efforts to invigorate media education and support journalism in Austria and other countries in his interview, *Commuter In A Communicating World*. He emphasizes the vital role of social mobility, education, and ethical responsibility in relation to societal development. The interview also explores topics such as artificial intelligence, technological development, and their societal impacts. Lastly, Kaltenbrunner articulates his hope for a better future through the promotion of critical thinking, social responsibility, and a diverse, globally oriented generation of young people.

Sigrid Bürstmayr and Bettina Gjecaj, both lecturers at the Institute of Design and Communication at the University of Applied Sciences in Graz, discuss the future of design theory in their dialogue titled *Empowering Change Through Design Education*. They engage in dialogue about topics like social and ecological design and reflect on their personal backgrounds and experiences that have sparked their interest in sustainability. The conversation emphasizes the significance of sustainable design across various disciplines and describes how designers can build bridges between social groups. Furthermore, they address the responsibility regarding ecological, economic, and social sustainability, and how these principles can be integrated into design education.

John Howkins, a writer, professor, and entrepreneur, reflects in his article *Curiosity And Creativity*, on what he has been focusing on in the last years—ingenuity and innovation. He sees that creativity can give fresh solutions to the problems that threaten our survival, such as climate change, poverty, and conflicts. The other word in the title, curiosity, was the driving force for John to go to China. That first trip has now been followed by many, and in the interview, he describes how he became part of the creative industry development in China.

Carlotta Beghi gives a glimpse of Parma, the world-famous City of Gastronomy, in the article *Youth Involvement As A Catalyst For Change*. Carlotta describes the potential and benefits of investing in youth skills but she also describes the challenges involved in making it happen. As the Focal Point for Parma's UNESCO designation as a Creative City of Gastronomy, she has been instrumental in developing the city's recognition for ten years.

Modesty Modesty is perhaps the quality that applies to all our authors. The process and the results are important to them, so this gives them the opportunity to pursue their respective paths consistently and unwaveringly. The focus is on change, not on marketing themselves. Let us conclude this introduction with a quote from Annie Lennox, who has been advocating for human rights, feminism, the fight against poverty, and AIDS awareness for decades: "Once you're an activist, you don't think about it; it just becomes part of you, a job that you do every day. It's not like I just fall from the sky and do something now and then. It's not a performance; it's a deep, deep commitment on my part." (Kurier, 25.12.2024, p. 36)

We hope that the articles inspire new ideas and meaningful change.