

Design for feeling the future beyond the human centered zone

In the past, the approach to handle climate change was mainly to raise awareness or a mere call for individuals to reuse, reduce and recycle on a personal level. Now, climate change is seen as an urgent and systemic issue. So, considering its urgency and complexity, we would need to significantly transform our society on different, if not all, levels.

Transformative Design can be seen as an attempt to reshape the design process to address this situation. It is a type of design that try to facilitate or enable radical transformation, e.g., by inspirational products, visions, and scenarios that make our ultimate goals 'thinkable'. Most design methodologies relating to sustainability are more about design concepts based on scientific documents than on the designers' sensibility and creative skills. This paper discusses some other additional roles the designer potentially could take when trying to facilitate transformation.

The core question is if some sort of transformative design is required to deal with climate change, what is it that could make people to really sense the future by that giving guidance for "right choices" and act as solutions for a necessary transformation that are able to both scale up and out. The design method is research through design, and there will be three cases illustrating my case.

(1) The first case is The Algae Dome:

It is a food-producing pavilion from Space10 (A Design Studio founded by IKEA). The project shows, in the future, micro-algae could be used as nutrient-rich food that potentially could replace soy protein in animal feed, as new biofuels to reduce greenhouse gas emission, and as an agent to treat industrial wastewater. The Algae Dome, therefore, is a space to spark conversations on how we might grow food in the future through sensory engagement. This, the first case is researched through available second-hand material.

(2) The second case is an exhibition called Future Dialogues Now:

Future Dialogues Now has two exhibition spaces themed at climate change. One exhibition space, which is defined as the future, shows that a 2050's celebration, where three different future artifacts as solutions that show what it would have partly changed the ongoing Climate Change, are on display and celebrated. The exhibition is a dialogue place between design and the public, future and now, anticipation and action. A live video dialogues stream from the 'future' space was broadcast in the other exhibition space. The other space, the exhibition which is regarded as 'present times' shows expressive videos from a design exploitation field study, sharing some feelings and understandings about the quality of life experienced in China. Besides, live videos from the 'Future-exhibition' with its artifacts will be displayed as a future celebration. The two spaces show how people sense the future in two different ways. The exhibitions are designed and organized by the author and some design students. This, the second case is therefore arguably researched through design practice.

(3) The third case involves some prototypes based on the two cases above:

The prototypes to be presented at the Anticipation Conference are some future artifacts that would show some snippets of possible future everyday living. The prototypes will explore the possible aesthetics forms of future everyday living which could be experienced by the audience and also could trigger some choices for current living. These prototypes could be regarded as a transdisciplinary dialogue to explore the 'form' of transformative design. The third case could, therefore, be regarded as researched through design exploration.

The three cases are all future scenarios imagined that try to trigger social-technical transition through different participants. Feeling the future as sensual object depends on the quality of real objects, spaces, and especially the

actions of others. I claim that transformative design is a fundamentally participatory act engaged with participants and different systems. The concept of the social-technical system changing through symbolic products could bring more palpable feelings about the future beyond the constraints of individual activity and imagination. Additionally, actions of others would probably also be influential elements that need to be carefully considered in any transformative design solution. This might indicate that some designs could gain from having more of performative characteristics included. As a final conclusion, the results out of the three projects could, therefore, be regarded as sensual images when exploring other possible systems than the one dominating today. Design as participation could be a feeling to understand the future, and design as aesthetics performance could be a feeling to a large group system which could be a base for transformative design scaling up beyond human-centered zone.