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Editorial

Relating systems thinking and design (VI)

Within social and environmental systems

This special issue of *FormAkademisk* comprises a selection of articles developed from presentations at the seventh Relating Systems Thinking and Design (RSD7) symposium, held at Politecnico di Torino, Turin, 23th-26th October 2018 (Barbero, 2018). A second collection from RSD7 is also planned to be published in *FormAkademisk* during 2020, continuing the close relationship between the journal and the RSD conference series (Forlizzi, Sevaldson, & Ryan, 2017; Hensel, Hensel, & Sevaldson, 2019; Jones, 2014; Sevaldson, 2018; Sevaldson & Ryan, 2014). The occasion of the RSD7 conference was especially important in the development of systemic design, being the occasion of the launch and founding meeting of the Systemic Design Association (SDA). The SDA will act as a membership organisation for the expanding community of practitioners and researchers that has developed through the RSD conferences.¹

Articles in this issue

The five articles collected here each take the approach of relating systems thinking and design from within the existing complexities of social and environmental systems, as opposed to understanding systems as things to be designed from the outside.

The first two papers explore systemic ways of engaging with and within the world as designers. **Dulmini Perera** (2020) examines the potential of play and fun making as a strategy for addressing wicked problems in “crisis sites” without “othering” the mess of the contradictory or nonsensical. Perera’s article draws on and integrates the work of Horst Rittel, Ranulph Glanville, and Cedric Price amongst others, and is grounded in a pilot project conducted in contemporary Dessau. **Marie Davidová** (2020) presents a diverse series of projects that embody a “Systemic Approach to Architectural Performance”, synergising principles from various “process-based” design fields. The projects are conceived in terms of a “real life co-design laboratory” that extends collaborative and collective processes towards the “co-generation of natural, cultural and technological fabric by humans and non-humans”.

The subsequent three papers address some of the challenging strategic questions that face systemic designers. **Ryan Murphy and Peter Jones** (2020) address the question of where to intervene in complex situations, introducing the notion of “leverage measures”, which they adapt from social network analysis and systems dynamics. Their paper is especially notable for bridging between the “soft” and “hard” systems traditions. **Chiara Battistoni and Sylvia Barbero** (2020) present insights from their attempts to develop local circular ecosystems for the manufacturing sector. In response to challenges experienced in two case studies, the authors propose the embedding of a facilitator – conceptualised as the “Local Systemic Network Booster” – to act as an “anchor tenant” within the ecosystem, enabling the “cultural paradigm shift” that is required to overcome the linear economy. In the final article in this issue, **Luke Feast** (2020) explores the unwritten constitution of New Zealand as a question of systemic design. Feast argues that the short-term adaptability of an unwritten constitution can become a weakness, leading to delays in the long-term planning that is needed in response to challenges

such as the climate crisis. Feast's article continues systemic design's movement "upstream" (Ryan, 2014) from designers' traditional realm of products and services, recognising that attempts to address systemic challenges require political will.

The special issue editors are extremely grateful to the authors and the anonymous peer reviewers for making this collection happen. We encourage the readers to get in touch with authors with suggestions, comments, and critique.

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Marie Davidová, Ben Sweeting and Birger Sevaldson

Special Issue Editors

Marie Davidová

Lecturer / Chair and founding member / Founding member
Cardiff University, Welsh School of Architecture / Collaborative Collective / Systemic Design
Association
DavidovaM@cardiff.ac.uk / md@collcoll.cc

Ben Sweeting

Principal Lecturer / Founding member
University of Brighton, School of Architecture and Design / Systemic Design Association
R.B.Sweeting@brighton.ac.uk

Birger Sevaldson

Professor / Founding member and vice-chair
Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Institute of Design / Systemic Design Association
birger.sevaldson@aho.no

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¹ See <https://systemic-design.net/sdrn/> for more information on the SDA.