Societal Collaborations

+ Change

+ Change Societal Collaborations is a selection of projects within the bachelor, master and doctoral + Change programmes at the Design Department, Linnaeus University in Växjö, Kalmar, Sweden. The projects set knowledge in motion for sustainable societies in collaboration with a broad range of societal actors.
Co-neighbouring is a design exploration that aims to examine possibilities of residents’ engagement and collaboration in a rented apartment building in Sweden. With support from NeighborLab, a workers cooperative based in Canada, the project explored how the neighbors could become active designers of their shared environment.

“When it comes to proposing changes and innovations in our cities and housing complexes, instead of it being those economically well established corporations, I think we should give space to local residents, since they are the experts of the areas they live in.”

Even though it is in everybody’s interest to sustain a healthy living environment, not everybody’s expertise is taken into account when developing cities towards becoming more sustainable and smart. As opposed to complex new technologies, the proposals created with the neighbors are low-tech, low-cost simple solutions for their building to become more resilient and community friendly. By co-creating cities the exclusive concept of the ‘smart’ city can be redefined.
A Space for Us
Ekatarina Feil
2021

(Collaborators: Local residents and urban collective spaces)

A Space for Us is an interactive design prototype that not only questions the societal hierarchy of who has the right to our public spaces, but also offers the particular room that you might need standing up to the challenge. How much space is dedicated to humans and how much space is dedicated to cars and other infrastructures?

The project advocates the right to reclaim urban areas for collective human activity, to design common spaces together with the public’s participation, in order to have a city life that feels safe, fulfilling, and intentional. By building a symbolic outdoor living space in the size of a small car that fits into the parking lot, the prototype shows the many variations one can use the space equivalent to the dimensions of a room in a public space. A place to stay, to play, to sell, to exhibit, share meals, or just to come together, designed with love and empathy for the needs of many – us.
The main project has been to run a green Local Economic Assessment (LEA) for IDA. A LEA is a tool used for local initiatives in rural development and the outcome of a LEA is often an analysis in the form of a report, sometimes concrete proposals, and an action plan on how to proceed. The project has been driven together with ‘Malmö Together’ and BRF IDA. The work has been done collaboratively together with a group of tenants and two representatives from the board. The aim of the project run in IDA has been, except for the expected outcome, to develop the tool for local urban initiatives and to incorporate social and environmental sustainability into the process.

“Nils Philips from Malmö Together and I have worked as project facilitators and project developers. My specific role in the project has been to elaborate and develop the environmental and social parts of the method. The project ends in January with a report holding both an analysis and some concrete proposals from the group. The project will be followed up by Malmö Togetherness and BRF IDA in [hopefully] the realization of one or two proposals, which might be interesting for me to take part in as a continuation in my research. My research is about design for sustainable living environment. I use strong sustainability as a framework for how I relate as a designer to sustainability.”
Pulp Växjö
Karen Cort Nielsen and Ellen Solding
2019

(Collaborators: Pizzeria Öster, Katedralskolan, Plantagen Växjö, ICA Supermarket Dalbo, Kulturparken Småland, Folkets bio Växjö)

Pulp is a critical and socially engaged meta design project that challenges the aesthetics of linearity through the material of paper. The project establishes a recycling practice that circulates paper as a hyper local resource. The project was carried out in the Swedish town Växjö in collaboration with local stakeholders in several neighborhoods, from where paper waste was donated. Resulting in a paper product with visual and tactile differences that reflect the characteristics of each neighborhood, highlighting material history and locality.

“Studying the copy paper, we were asking ourselves: why is the classic A4 white? Why don’t we know its origins? And what does its aesthetic mean for our practices around it?”

Our interaction with objects is dependent on how they are made to look and function. The everwhite anonymous surface of the copy paper reflects an aesthetic of linearity that implies low worth and makes us mindlessly waste as if resources were endless.

“By innovating a new practice of paper recycling in non-industrial systems, we allow for the material to escape the aesthetics of linearity and anonymity, thereby proposing not only a new paper product but also a new material narrative.”
Mind the Dot?
Agnes Askar, Camilla Guzmán and Mathilda Dahlquist
2018

(Collaborator: Swedese)

Ugly fruits. Non normative bodies. Flaws. Terms coming from mindsets. From our perception of what is normal. Beauty standards are to be found everywhere.

In the furniture industry, a great amount of leather is often wasted due to scars, insect bites or other marks that the cow gets during its lifetime. These are fully natural marks which don’t have to impact the quality of the leather - still the primary choice is to discard. The perception of fault in quality is a societally constructed standard of what is desirable. In dialogue with Swedish furniture company Swedese, a common interest was found in questioning these beauty standards within the industry and revealing waste as an avoidable outcome. The project questions perceptions of attractiveness in furniture and addresses beauty norms in a larger context. What if we actually wouldn’t mind the dot?
Drill for Bees
Natalie Jirmann
2021

(Collaborators: SSAM, Sensus Coompanion Kronoberg, Återbruket)

Drill for Bees is a design project proposal in collaboration with SSAM (Southern Småland’s Waste and Environmental Services), Sensus and Coompanion Kronoberg. It combines giving value to unusable resources while facilitating integration possibilities for participants in the form of handicraft activities, in this case building bee hotels from discarded massive wooden furniture.

Drill for Bees is an event that could take place on site at Återbruket in Växjö, where Sensus participants and locals work together, in a linguistic and cultural exchange, for the common cause of building new homes for insects which later can be displayed around the city areas and the many lakes of Växjö.
"Put Up a Bag"
Sebastian Orehovacki Månsson
2020

(Collaborators: Local residents and urban collective spaces)

*Put up a Bag* is a design intervention project which draws parallels between the Swedish *pant* system and the normative societal perception and valuing of time.

The large proportion around discarded *pant* can largely be argued to be linked to the socio-cultural perception of what we as a society have concerning the value of time, and how prone we as a middle class are to gaining time by throwing *pant* in the garbage instead of actually recycling it. *Put up a Bag* is a public trash can sorting initiative that could work as a movement in order to highlight the socio-political injustice between socio-economic classes in Western consumer culture.

By tying up a bag to a public trash can, marked with the text “*Pant*” we can simplify the action for those who feel the need to collect what others throw away. Until proper *pant*-separations are installed we can all together reduce the enormous amount of recyclable materials that are being lost while promoting social, economic and ecological sustainability.
The design project Vikgubbe promotes art as a medium for social change and multicultural expression. Together with Araby Park Arena in Växjö the project has elaborated on an activity that allows a space for interaction and spontaneous collaboration between participants and supports the multicultural community center in their strive for integration.

The project is inspired by the methodology of the drawing game “Exquisite Corpse”, where a folded piece of paper is passed along between players, each person drawing one part of a body without seeing the work of the person before them. By bridging the theme and idea of painting together with the making of public murals the participants are given the opportunity to create together without the need for much verbal explanation or rules.
In a move towards inclusive equality, the project *Do you .gif a f*ck?* explores a digital equivalent of the analogue protest sign. In collaboration with feminist activist associations Reklamera and Kvinnefronten, gif’s that advocate women’s rights were designed.

“If a protest is valid only if it’s performed as an act in public then all bodies that can’t take themselves to the streets will be excluded, Covid-related or not”.

The definition of “public space” is re-interpreted in an era where social media has generated an online infrastructure that is reshaping societies and the perception of the public. Being public in the private sphere opens possibilities to participate in political actions from home.
The Småländ Climate Positive Textiles Lab
Ashleigh Spooner
2021

(Collaborators: VXO FarmLab, Hemslöjden Kronoberg)

The Småländ Climate Positive Textiles Lab takes shape as a localised praxis of thinking through doing, weaving relational understandings of sustainability through collective labour. It is based at VXO FarmLab in Småländ and draws together a loose collective of students, materialising sustaining fashion, whilst at the same time materialising a sustaining community.

“By ‘fashion’ I mean: the visual ways in which we craft our identities, for example clothing, piercings, hairstyles, body paint. In this expanded definition there is no binary of traditional vs. modern, or Western vs. non-Western.”

With the focus on reducing overconsumption and highlighting non-toxic production methods the project studied the slow rhythm of a technology that already has been developed over thousands of years – flax cultivation. Learning and spreading the knowledge of traditional fashion processes could slow down industrial fashion to a point where it is no longer ‘productive’: a glitch or virus in the machine of capitalism. The Småländ Climate Positive Textiles Lab is a petri dish in which this virus can be propagated and soon escape from the lab into the wild.
This project is an animated video that explains how REKO-ring works and thereby makes it easier for the consumer to buy locally produced food. The collaboration partners for this project were Anna Tuväng och Sofia Carlström who were the admins of REKO-ring in Kalmar at that time. REKO-rings “Rejäl Konsumption” is an initiative where small-scale producers get a direct link to the consumers. The producers write what they’re selling in Facebook groups and consumers place their orders before picking it up at the regular meeting spot.

“Many people want to buy organic and locally produced food but are struggling to understand the concept of REKO-ring. Taking the step from buying things at the store to going to a REKO-ring can seem quite big if you don’t know how things work and are managed. The animation is used as a tool to help people make the shift from eating food that has traveled far to eating organic and locally produced food. This shift will both reduce emissions and help local farmers.”
This visual communication project explores the theme of nuclear waste handling from a holistic perspective through speculative design. With Svensk Kärnbränslehantering AB (SKB Swedish Nuclear Fuel and Waste Management) as an informant to the project, giving an insight into the scale and practicalities of the nuclear waste industry today, the project takes the topic into a speculative future.

“Our intention with this project is to expose and inform on the infrastructures surrounding deep geological repositories and methods of communicating through visual markers to future generations.”

The project takes form as an exhibition in a distant future, taking the complexity of the topic of nuclear waste into a speculative space to encourage general audiences to engage in the dialogue on the subject. The space uses speculative means of communication; language, timeline and markers, to evoke a deeper interest, point of discussion and exploration of the topic.
'Check, mate!' is a campaign designed for the Kalmar chess association (Kalmar schackklubb), Sweden. With user experience and interaction design methods and processes, the design team worked collaboratively with the organisation on the basis of chess as a common cultural language, yet a sport that should be accessible to all.

“We were tasked with developing a guiding design solution which could help improve the organisation from an inclusive and multicultural approach”.

The campaign is written in 5 of the most commonly spoken languages in Kalmar: Arabic, English, Somali, Persian and surely Swedish — also in Sami. It includes an open-door event in the town center where the general public were welcome to play a game of chess and sign up to the association. It is part of a wider toolkit which provides ongoing support for the association to expand their search for new members and promote inclusivity; consisting of visuals for social media, a membership campaign poster and interactive postcards, a new logo and updates for their website like a multilingual page.