Introduction

Designers and design scholars are engaging in various ways with the societal challenges of our time. Evident in several recent elections, these challenges include an escalation in political polarization, ideological extremism, diminishing trust of citizens in their governments, and rising inequality. This has prompted reactions from the design community such as the open call to "Stand Up for Democracy" in 2017 by Victor Margolin and Ezio Manzini. Such responses are arguably part of a much longer and larger shift in design toward societal concerns echoing, for example, through the manifestos and movements of the 20th century. Societal agendas are by now widespread, evident in well-recognized design approaches amended as "participatory," "humanitarian," "inclusive," and "social." As design expands and rises to meet societal challenges, constituent political and economic dynamics also become central to design, as elucidated through this special issue titled "Mapping Design Inequalities."

Spanning many forms and methods of design, examples in this special issue include urban plans and places, online platforms and computer programs, housing and community participation. Across these, design is examined in terms of effects on access, belonging, expression, interaction, and representation. A striking example is that of the "curb cut" in Elizabeth Petrick's article. Curb cuts into sidewalks at crosswalks enable accessibility for wheelchairs and prams—the curb cut has since spread beyond urban design as a powerful metaphor and movement for accessibility within computing and technology. In some of the examples, societal agendas may be explicit and intentional, for example in self-proclaimed "social design." However, the authors' argument is more fundamental and far-reaching: design is always entangled within political and economic dynamics, including their structural inequalities. From different points of view, each article elaborates on how design affects social in- and exclusion.

In addition to elucidating the inequalities affected at the micro- and human-scale (such as the curb cut), authors also engage with macro-scale political and economic implications. In their article, Guy Julier and Lucy Kimbell draw our attention to the limits of social design. Despite its best intentions, social design operates within and typically cannot transcend the structural inequalities of neo-liberal governance and capitalist logics. Further attending to such inequalities in terms of geography, Adam Kaasa's auto-ethnography turns the workings of an international design

https://doi.org/10.1162/desi_e_00558

competition inside out. Detailing its institutional networks, entry requirements, and jury composition, he draws out the exclusions, oppressions, and colonial logics. These two articles reveal the profession and institutions of design as entangled and often complicit with structural inequality.

Notably, the editors and authors of this special issue include many sociologists, and the co-editors have largely been based at the London School of Economics and Political Science. This illustrates the expansion of design as a subject and matter of concern for many disciplines. Design has shifted to include societal concerns and, vice versa, those disciplines for which society is the primary subject have turned their attention toward design. In her introduction to this special issue, Mona Sloane draws our attention to sociologist Lucy Suchman's query, "Has *design* now displaced *development* as the dominant term for deliberative, transformational change?" As design takes on—or, even, takes over—societal challenges, designers and design scholars must engage seriously with issues such as inequality.

Bruce Brown
Richard Buchanan
Carl DiSalvo
Dennis Doordan
Kipum Lee
Victor Margolin
Ramia Mazé

Errata

The following members were inadvertently omitted from the Editorial Advisory Board list in the previous issue (vol. XXXV, no. 3 Summer 2019). We apologize for this oversight.

Anne Boddington
Kingston University, London
Cheryl Buckley
University of Brighton
Lin-Lin Chen
Eindhoven University of Technology
Sabine Junginger
Lucerne Univeristy of Applied Sciences & Art, Switzerland
Marco Vinicio Ferruzca Navarro
Universidad Autonóma Metropolitana
Nassim (JafariNaimi) Parvin
Georgia Tech
Alejandro Tapia
Universidad Anáhuac, México