A checklist for sustainability
Foreword

This new issue of David Report presents an important subject in a somewhat laid back fashion. You may say concise instead of long and elaborate. We will not provide all of the answers, but we will on the other hand ask a lot of questions and present thoughtful quotes and best practise examples. According to us, asking questions is one of the most important ways to acquire knowledge.

The task this time is to present a checklist for sustainability. Regular David Report readers will probably recognize the seven steps of the checklist in this issue. It’s based on the Sustainable Wheel, a holistic vision of sustainable design developed by the knowledge company Designboost. As you also may remember the Sustainable Wheel was the base for issue no 8 of David Report.

Some fashionistas may say that some of our examples are not brand new. We say - it’s on purpose. There are other solutions than newness when it comes to sustainability. You will be able to read a lot more about this in our next David Report issue this fall. Stay tuned.

Welcome to another issue of David Report, and have a nice summer!

Our keynote

You have to do right. Today consumers demand transparency; "Where has this product come from, what is it doing to me now and where is it going to?"

*Sustainability* is not about doing nothing.

*Sustainable design* is a success factor that creates attraction and adds new communicative possibilities for a brand. Which means: sustainable design is not only an idealistic matter, it could also result in new and profitable sales. But stay away from the green-washing, you have to play the cards correctly and credible.

The questions is - how do a company best conceptualize sustainable design? Or maybe we should not conceptualize it at all?

One thing is clear - sustainable design doesn’t have to be boring nor ugly any longer.

You will be able to check out some carefully picked examples further on in this report and some relevant questions we have to ask ourselves…

WOULDN’T WE ALWAYS HAVE TO EXTEND SUSTAINABILITY BEYOND MATERIALS?

”What will endure is what is uniquely human”
- Jennifer Leonard
IS SUSTAINABLE DESIGN JUST AN EXCUSE FOR MORE CONSUMPTION?
MUSTN’T WE MAKE SUSTAINABILITY INCLUSIVE RATHER THAN EXCLUSIVE?
"We must have more holistic approach to sustainability to avoid sustaining the unsustainable" - Kristina Börjesson.

DO YOU HAVE A HOLISTIC VIEW?
Let’s continue to the seven steps of the checklist…

or

the seven spokes of the Sustainable Wheel, as Designboost would call it.

• ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE
• INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT
• AFFECTIVITY
• AESTHETICS
• MULTI QUALITY
• AUTHENTICITY
• COMPATIBILITY
Keywords: responsible, healthy, resource-economic

- Which material resources do we use directly or indirectly (for example, does our product consume too much energy when in use)?

- What waste do we produce directly or indirectly (for example, recycling of our product is costly; reuse is complicated as it demands transport or substantial deconstruction)?

- Is a sustainable product a product that is beneficial to both society and environment?
ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE - responsible, healthy, resource-economic

ReMade

Reusable bag by Claesson Koivisto Rune for Stockholm City Mission
ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE - responsible, healthy, resource-economic

Biogradable pressed grass tableware by Tom Dixon

Cradle to cradle

Artek pavilion of recycled paper by Shigeru Ban
ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE - responsible, healthy, resource-economic

Chest of drawers ‘You can’t lay down your memory’ and Rag Chair, both by Tejo Remy
Chair Parapu by Claesson Koivisto Rune, made in DuraPulp - a fully compostable new paper product created in the PulpLab
INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Keywords: dynamic, out-of-the-box, differentiation

- Is your product merely innovative or does it contribute to development; an improvement of our lives?

- How can we break innovation barriers sustainable development?

- Do you prefer evolution or revolution as a method for creating better sustainable design and, consequently, a more durable society?

- Is transformation a version of innovation - i.e user-centered design?
INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT - dynamic, out-of-the-box, differentiation

Creativity

Bus Rapid Transit system by Jaime Lerner in Curitiba, Brasilia

Example of a creative reuse of IKEA furniture from the IKEA Hacker website
INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT - dynamic, out-of-the-box, differentiation

Paperwood chair of recycled paper and wood by Drill design

The Black Google webpage during Earth Hour 2008.

Change
INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT - dynamic, out-of-the-box, differentiation

2.6 billion people just got their own toilet.

Peepoo is a personal single use toilet by Peepoople that will change the lives for billions of people.

Mobility for Each One - an affordable and highly effective prosthetic for those injured by mines.
INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT - dynamic, out-of-the-box, differentiation

Surprise

Tide Chandelier of plastic debris by Stuart Haygarth
Why do we keep certain things and throw others away without a second thought?

Emotions make us buy, whilst feelings make us keep. How can a product get a meaning; tell a story which goes beyond temporary lifestyles and makes us associate and recognise?

How do we design and inspire people to “love” their objects over a lifetime?

What meaning have: recycling, durable materials, environmentally friendly production and use, if the consumers don’t discover, understand and care for the product, i.e., they are disregarded while still functioning?
AFFECTIVITY - emotion - engagement, feeling - attachment

Childhood plate

Rosebud
A personal bracelet

Richard Ginori @ Taste Lounge exhibition at Milan Design Week 2009 by architect and designer Paola Navone.
AFFECTIVITY - emotion - engagement, feeling - attachment

Brio train

Memory

Child scarf with stain
AFFECTIVITY - emotion - engagement, feeling - attachment

Reference

Kurbits pattern by Mattias Norström of Moustasche ape
- Have we realised that the aesthetic is about immediate but also lasting appeal?

- Do we confuse aesthetics with beauty? Are we aware that beauty is something negotiated and what is judged as beautiful one day might not be the next?

- Is aesthetics as opposed to beauty less related to lifestyle and culture?

- What makes an object truly age with grace?
AESTHETICS - timelessness, harmony, value

Essential

Guernica by Pablo Picasso
AESTHETICS - timelessness, harmony, value

Grace
AESTHETICS - timelessness, harmony, value

Iconic

The Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen
AESTHETICS - timelessness, harmony, value

Drinking glasses by Jasper Morrison for Alessi

Honest

"Audio 1 Kompaktanlage" by Dieter Rams
AESTHTICS- timelessness, harmony, value

Low-voice

Ultra silencer by Pia Wallén for Electrolux
Do we recognise that quality is a multi capacity?

Have we tried to specify our products capacity beyond the most obvious; material quality and physical functionality?

Have we recognised quality as lasting meaning and appeal and considered if our product makes sense: is meaningful or appears merely strange: new and cool?

Whatever we produce it pollutes our environment in one way or the other, can we then afford to buy cheap things?

What's your personal opinion of the Gucci family slogan: "Quality is remembered long after the price is forgotten"?

How can the use of multi quality make objects survive year after year and be inherited by the generations to come?

Keywords: experiential, multi capacity, value

Foldable bike by Biomega

Flexible
Urban bicycle helmets from Danish company Yakkay

Individual
MULTI QUALITY - experiential, multi capacity, value

Concrete pavilions by Snøhetta at Kivik Art Centre

Sensorial
MULTI QUALITY - experiential, multi capacity, value

Companion

Novel The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger
MULTI QUALITY - experiential, multi capacity, value

Holistic

A good example of sustainable city development - Västra Hamnen in Malmö
AUTHENTICITY

Keywords: identity, narrative, ritual

- Is an authentic product an object which is true to its meaning and its function?

- How can we use the knowledge and authenticity from handicraft and local heritage in a global industrial context?

- An object without history is fiction and an object which has not moved on from history is retrospective. An authentic product could be seen as a mix of the two. What is your product?

- How do we create authentic experiences that has meaning and value and a strong sense of cultural identity?

- Will future consumers see a Swedish designed but Chinese produced Orrefors glass vase as Swedish?
Heritage

Robe from KR LT Studio, a conceptual design studio based in Lithuania

Midsommarträdet Maja by Vanja Djanieff for Svensk Slöjd
AUTHENTICITY - identity, narrative, ritual

Storytelling

Martin Margiela show at Milan Design Week 2009
Genuine

AUTHENTICITY - identity, narrative, ritual

The Olde Bell Inn - a remake of a classic British 'inn' by Ilse Crawford
AUTHENTICITY - identity, narrative, ritual

Lego bricks

Fantasy
COMPATIBILITY

Keywords: sharing, interdisciplinary, seamless

- What is at stake if we make our product compatible with that of our competitor? Is it a long term negative, a short term or no negative at all? Is an eventual negative more about prestige and image than real losses? Is compatibility not a true sustainable action?

- How can we make new products connect?

- How can we better create joint platforms (designers, materials, technology etc)?

- How can we connect history with the present and the future?

- Isn’t compatibility also about supporting human to human relationships.

One billion downloads of Apple apps in just nine months

Social

Sharing design knowledge at Designboost annual key event
COMPATIBILITY - sharing, interdisciplinary, seamless

Swedish brand Poc combines protection and design at the highest level
COMPATIBILITY - sharing, interdisciplinary, seamless

Humanistic

Collaboration between Apple and Nike

Art at skateboard arena Stapelbädds-parken in Malmö
COMPATIBILITY - sharing, interdisciplinary, seamless

Old cups as lamps connects the past with the future in a smart way

Connecting
Absolut Choir by Teenage Engineering which enabled people to interact with the machines via the web
Our wind-up

We hope that you found the examples that visualized our checklist interesting. We do also hope that our questions made you reflect on the complexity of sustainability.

As we mentioned earlier - it’s important to always have an holistic approach to sustainability. Otherwise it won’t answer its purpose. The recent failure with ethanol fuel is one good example. Something a lot of people thought was a great substitute for gasoline is now heavily questioned.

Or look at ‘energy efficient’ houses. Advanced technology controls the indoor climate; temperature, ventilation, light etc. The problem is that we humans react negatively when we are not in charge of our own comfort. Could these houses at all be referred to as sustainable when users are likely to interfere with the system in an effort to make it suit themselves? Sometimes these systems even have to be removed because we don’t want to live and work at a place that doesn’t respects us as individuals with different needs.

What is sustainability to you?

David Report

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About David Carlson

Having worked with design as a competitive advantage for twenty years David Carlson is renowned for his knowledge of strategies in design, communication and brand development.

About Kristina Börjesson

A PhD in Design Theory and a MA in Communication are matching Kristina Börjesson’s 30 years of experience in management, communication and strategic development. She is currently also a Research Associate at Central Saint Martins College in London.

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BREAK THE RULES?