

# Design for Social Impact

“  
The future of design is not about products, it's about designing systems that are more responsive to human needs.  
”  
— Tim Brown



Boost Investment  
in Human-Centered Design

56% of organizations plan to invest more in HCD in the next 12–18 months (2025).

(Progress, 2024)



Of respondents believe that building human-centric applications is more important now than it was before 2022, driven by evolving user needs, increased digital interactions, and cultural shifts.

(Progress, 2024)



UN Stockholm Conference

Donald Norman

Van der Ryn

Anne-Marie Willis

Tim Brown

Deborah Szebeko

**1970**  
Seeds of  
Awareness

**1980**  
Bridging Consumer Growth  
and Ecological Concern

**1990**  
Rise of  
User-Centered Design

**2000**  
Ethical  
Questions Surface

**2010**  
Systemic Shocks  
and Strategic Shifts

**2020**  
Expanding the  
Circle of Concern

**2030**  
Emerging  
Future

## Participatory Design Movement

1970s–80s: Scandinavian labor politics meets tech development, integrating democratic values into design.

## Ecological Design Introduced

1996: Van der Ryn & Cowan call for regenerative, whole-systems approaches to sustainable design.

## Design Amid Financial Crisis

2008: Global downturn positions HCD as a tool for lean, socially responsive innovation.

## Humanity-Centered Design

2020: Design shifts to address structural injustice and climate crisis, focusing on collective survival.

## Global Environmental Awareness

1972: UN Stockholm Conference frames environmental health as a global political concern.

## Rise of User-Centered Design

1990s: Neoliberalism fuels individualism; design focuses on user needs, often at the cost of systemic justice.

## Expanding the 'User'

Post-2000: HCD begins including ecosystems and non-human stakeholders, merging human and environmental needs

## Life-Centered Design

2009: Tim Brown proposes long-term, ethical design for people and the planet.

## HCD Validated in Global Health

2023: Research confirms HCD's efficiency and social value in cross-sector health initiatives.