

Design for Social Impact

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

— Tim Brown

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1970
Seeds of Awareness

Participatory Design Movement

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

Global Environmental Awareness

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

1980
Bridging Consumer Growth and Ecological Concern

Ecological Design Introduced

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

Rise of User-Centered Design

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

2000
Ethical Questions Surface

Design Amid Financial Crisis

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

Expanding the 'User'

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

56%

Boost Investment in Human-Centered Design

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

(Progress, 2024)

76%

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)

2020
Expanding the Circle of Concern

2030
Emerging Future

Humanity-Centered Design

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

HCD Validated in Global Health

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