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## **DESIGN FOR ALL AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

My name is Kristina Sahlqvist. I'm Visiting professor in Spatial Design and Sustainable Development at HDK, the School of Design and Crafts at Göteborg University. I will talk about Design for everyday life, with the focus on quality of life for all and I will give you some examples from my and my students work at HDK.

**“Designers, architects and manufactors – it's time to progress one step further. Now that function, ergonomics and at least some environmental considerations have been incorporated into the design process. It's time for more in-depth approach and more improvement. Can Design for All – highly politically correct term – be the next, natural way to go?”**

This question the journalist Susanne Helgeson asks in the first number of the year (2006/1) in the **FORM** Design Magazine – Sweden's greatest design magazine.

“Design for All is now on the political agenda in Europe as well as in Japan and the US and the concept should be the most multicultural and politically correct of all. More and more people are now working on Design for All, but it is not visible and it can therefor be hard to understand the meaning of the concept. The Swedish government has decided that the term's meaning will permeate all public sector projects in achitecture and design. The official statement says that: Design for All can be regarded as a guiding principle, which means that during all planning and design of products, buildings, environmets, and IT sevicees, consideration will be paid to accessibility and useability for all individuals as far as this is possible” (Susanne Helgeson, Form).

At the Design Advanced programme at HDK, I have a theme where Design for All and Sustainable Devolepment is presented with seminars, workshops, lectures and tutoringtime. Later on I will give you some examples of projects and methods from this theme, both local and global ones.

There are 320 students enrolled at HDK, which is located in the heart of Gothenburg. HDK is a part of the Gothenburg University and the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts that consists of six different Art Schools: Music, Opera, Film, Photographi, Fine Arts, Design and Crafts. Cooperation between the various schools is being strongly encouraged and this provides opportunities for cross-disciplinary research not only within, but also outside the Faculty. This makes HDK's education unique in the Scandinavian countries.

We have a three-year Bachelor's and a two-year Master Programme and HDK offer a design programme that consist of spatial design, product design and visual communication. Our master programme does not maintain the traditional divisions between various disciplines, but views design from a process perspective. The programme is aimed at students who have achieved a level of maturity suited to a free form of study and who can work both individually and in groups.

At HDK we are presently discussing the question of responsibility, and the question of the ethics behind what a student designs. If we take a look at the world around us, we are constantly being bombarded with reports about the greenhouse effect and natural catastrophes. In less than 50 years, conditions on earth have changed so much, that we can no longer deny the fact, that those of us who live in the western world, must change our way of living and our life-style. The Swedish Government has put forward a plan of action for Sustainable Development and Design for All, in order to make our society accessible and open for everyone to participate in – a plan that should be realised before 2010. The concept ‘Design for All’ is a part of this plan of action, which means that all buildings, products, information and communication should be accessible to everyone - as far as this is possible.

In order to face this changing world we must therefore create possibilities of development for a new generation of designers. They will have to meet the challenge of a more humane production, a different market and a sustainable development of society. During their studies we should present them with a wide pallet of meaningful knowledge and equip them with all the necessary requirements to develop an independent, responsible, critical way of thinking in order for them to grow as designers.

I will describe some design projects from our Design Advanced programme that have both methods and applied design.

### **HDK**

This is what the building looks like that HDK has been located in since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is not accessible and does not communicate well with the city’s inhabitants. Few people know what HDK is and where it is located, even fewer people know how to get into the building. Though it is a cultural-historical building, it could be rebuilt to meet up with today’s needs and requirements. A master student shows in his degree work in what way HDK, could be made physically accessible, have better communication with the public and give them clearer information. His suggestion is part of a project in the West part of Sweden called: “Design with Care”.

### **DESIGN WITH CARE**

Design with Care is a project but also a methodology, whereby sustainable development is integrated into the design process in three dimensions, consisting of an ecological, a social and an economic dimension. Västra Götaland in the West of Sweden, is known for being best at sustainable development in the whole of Sweden. ‘Design with Care’ is Sweden’s largest design project with the aim of developing environments, projects and methodologies in sustainable development with the concept Design for All. This project has won the “Design Year Price in 2005” as one of 1.690 projects during the Design Year. HDK and “Design with Care” have together developed a course where we use the methodology and this course has been given several times at HDK. The future plan is to offer it to different design schools in the entire region.

### **MASTERLAB**

If Design with Care is a methodology, then MasterLab is defined as applied design. It is a laboratory for experiments and the marketing of products, environments and visual communication with a focus on everyday life and Design for All. Masterlab is a collaborative project between HDK and the Ågrenska Foundation, which is a centre for disabled children and youth, situated outside Gothenburg. The Ågrenska Virtual Academy is part of an international network and is in the process of building up a virtual research academy

sponsored by Microsoft. This year MasterLab has presented a new studio at the school - a meeting point for students and tutors from Ågrenska and HDK. The focus of MasterLab, is the human being, where the needs and experiences of the human senses are our point of departure. The project can encompass making buildings and streets accessible to all, or making information and communication clear and easily understandable. It can be a question of developing body borne techniques or techniques that are integrated into the objects or a building, or it can also be a question of developing the importance of art, light or sound for our health. At the end of this lecture we will watch a short film, a workshop with some students working together in a kitchen at Ågrenska.

## **DESIGN BAN PONG HI**

This year HDK has established international contacts in a collaborative project with Kids Ark, with the working title Design Ban Pong Hi. It is a village in the north of Thailand near Burma and Laos and this particular region have great social, cultural and economic problems. Kid's Ark is a sister HIV-organisation to Noak's Ark and the organisation the Red Cross in Stockholm. They have together built a school, a kindergarten and a handicraft workshop with the help of development assistance. HDK has been invited to take part in this unique project, where design is used as a social tool for long-term and sustainable development.

The project has two aims:

To develop the inhabitants' unique knowledge of traditional handicrafts, and together with Swedish designers and students draw up and renew Thai handicraft idioms and working methods in textiles, wood and bambu. We have a lot to learn from each other and we can support the young women and children where many of them have been infected with HIV. We are able to share, from fellow-being to fellow-being, our knowledge of social behaviour in order to assist them and create the conditions essential for them to be able to make a living and be self-supporting. Besides HDK, the collaborators in this group are Swedish and Thai designers and the University of Chang Mai in the north of Thailand with the Faculty of Arts, Economy and Humanity, the Swedish Embassy in Bangkok, Swedish Trade and Swedish Companies.

## **WORKSHOP**

Finally I will show a four minutes long film from HDK MasterLab and the collaboration with the Ågrenska Foundation, situated outside Göteborg on a very beautiful small island. This film is about seven students, four of them are design students from HDK and three of them are college students from Göteborg and Ågrenska, one of them is a girl with a complicated serious multihandicap.

After having watched this film, we are sure that by meeting persons with specific needs, being introduced to situations in their everyday life, and maybe even try parts of their reality, we all can benefit. This is a fact, regardless of our profession. It will give us a greater understanding, and above all, new and invaluable important knowledge in our building of an accessible society.

What strikes me is the fact that behind each specific problem, searching for it's special solution, there often lies general issues and general methods - so - in the specific we can often find the general.