Editors' Introduction

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Abstract:
This introduction argues for an expanded understanding of design's role in diplomacy since 1945, looking beyond "soft power" or "cultural diplomacy" to designers' potential to shape government systems and provision and to play a wider role in transnational diplomatic exchanges. The papers gathered in this volume explore diplomacy through the work of philanthropic foundations, design networks, sites of art and design education, as well as manufacturers and retailers of furniture and product design and craft producers.

Keywords: design; diplomacy; democracy; transnational; exchange; soft power

The impetus for this special issue of *Design and Culture* was a one-day symposium the editors co-convened at University of Brighton in November 2015, entitled "'Soft' to 'Hard' Power? Changing Visions of Diplomacy by Design From 1945 Onwards," exploring the ways that design has enabled transnational diplomatic exchanges over seventy years. Its aim was to generate a more nuanced discussion about the contribution of design in the diplomatic arena. With its speculative title, the symposium's proposition drew upon Joseph Nye's familiar concept of "soft" or co-optive power, the ability to shape others' preferences in international politics via

persuasive, attractive cultural means. These "soft" forms of influence are intrinsically related to, and often operate alongside, the more conventional "hard" coercive power of military might or political authority (Nye 1990). However, we contemplated how design—unlike fine art, for example—might encompass both "soft" and "hard" aspects simultaneously, offering a modified interpretation of "hard power" to include design's fundamental role in shaping the very systems and materiality of government, rather than focusing purely upon its representative role within culture. We suggested that while the exchanges of "soft" power through design continue—through international expos and cultural events—designers are increasingly being called upon to develop policy and infrastructure solutions.

Since the 1970s, designers like Gui Bonsiepe have argued for the profession's significance in shaping social democracy (Margolin 2012). Design historian Victor Margolin highlights designers' potential for influencing, sustaining, and improving democracy, as a structure and process. Moving beyond historical accounts focused on governmental use of design for communication, national projection, or in supporting trade and export, Margolin argues that we need to examine design's deeper role within a contemporary democracy: its engagement both with the institutions and procedures that comprise a democratic system, as well as its potential for supporting the provision of basic human rights such as access to food, shelter, health care, and education. We can also apply these categories to design's potential role within contemporary diplomatic processes.

The role of architecture within the diplomatic arena is now well established. Embassy architecture and interiors—the psycho-spatial theatre of diplomacy—have been the focus of a number of studies over the last decade (Loeffler 2010; Hagströmer 2011; Floré and McAtee 2017), as have examinations of architecture's function in

reinforcing transnational political alliances such as the US-UK "special relationship" (Fraser and Kerr 2007). Beyond dedicated diplomatic spaces, architects have also played a vital role in supporting diplomatic efforts, helping rebuild cities and reconstructing communities in the aftermath of war or natural disaster. The US-based charity Architecture for Humanity, for example, originated in 1990s post-conflict Kosovo, evolving into the Open Architecture Collaborative, an international network drawing together practitioners across architecture and design to influence local politics. Meanwhile, the understanding of design's function in the diplomatic context has perhaps been limited by our perception of what "design" constitutes. By thinking beyond designed objects (industrially-produced products, exhibitions, etc.), to design thinking or design approaches, a more fundamental relationship emerges between contemporary designers and the diplomatic process, one explored by researchers such as Lucy Kimbell (with the UK Cabinet Office Policy Lab) and Derek B. Miller (Director of US-based Policy Lab), with their advocacy of design thinking in government and as a formally recognised aspect of design education (Kimbell 2015; Miller and Rudnick 2011). In turn, governments are showing increasing understanding of the wider role and value of design, beyond its potential for enhancing product exports.[i]

This special issue explores how design's role goes beyond conventional exchanges of "soft power" or "cultural diplomacy." That latter term, referring broadly to communication between governments and foreign audiences, lacks sufficient precision (Ang et al 2015, 365), and, as the historian Jessica Gienow-Hecht argues, is further problematized by the essential involvement of non-governmental actors such as curators, teachers, lecturers and, in our case, designers (2010, 10). It is this intricate network of public and private relationships, of interlinking professional and

educational institutions, foundations and businesses, which can support, distort, or fragment state interests, that is a central concern of the current volume.

Much of the existing literature on the post-1945 period examines the political role of art and designed objects, often via mechanisms of national representation and exchanges such as international Expos and travelling exhibitions (Castillo 2010; Masey and Morgan 2008; Crowley and Pavitt 2008). Construing these exhibitions as "diplomatic envoys," some scholars have taken a long perspective on the shifting mechanisms of large scale Expos (Luscombe 2014), while others have unpicked specific smaller exhibitions in detail to probe curatorial impulses (Jessup and Smith 2016). Whilst older studies dwelt on the USA's presence and influence (Haddow 1997; Hixson 1997), recent analyses of the involvement of Eastern Bloc countries have opened up the possibility of new understandings of their impact (Peteri 2012) and the complexity of Cold War cultural diplomacy (Barnhisel 2015). Simplistic, bilateral understandings of this conflict are increasingly complicated by a wider geographical scope that includes Asia, the Middle East and beyond. Extending research beyond the Cold War period has encouraged a deeper appreciation of the ways in which design and designers engage with foreign publics, not only via exhibitions (Williams 2016) but also at cultural and sporting events like the Olympics (Traganou 2016). Researchers are only beginning to comprehend the impact of the increasingly multidimensional cultural interactions of the so-called 'information age' (Nye 2004, 81-96).

This special issue builds on and contributes to this scholarship, revealing new insights into the 1958 Brussels Expo and exposing little known exhibitions of design across the Iron Curtain, in addition to investigating other mechanisms for international communication via institutions such as art and design schools,

philanthropic foundations, professional design networks, as well as manufacturers and retail. By necessity, these articles engage with Cold War politics, but also move beyond conventional superpower relationships to look at interactions between the USA and countries like India and Japan in post-colonial contexts. In so doing, they reveal how diplomacy can result in more subtle, collaborative relationships that challenge simplistic assumptions about the transmission of power and culture.

The responsive character of diplomacy in adopting the techniques and mannerisms of the "other" side is highlighted in Susan E. Reid's paper on the development of the Soviet displays at the Brussels Expo in 1958. The negotiations involved in presenting one nation—the USSR—for consumption in the West were subtle and complex, bringing forth the tension between the two contradictory impulses of diplomacy: an assertion of difference and a demonstration of similarity. Katarina Serulus' research thematizes design as a transnational 'language' of Cold War diplomacy. Serulus' essay, which focuses on Belgium and the USSR, details the interplay between institutional and personal relationships operating not only across national boundaries but also traversing the Iron Curtain in the early 1970s. Belgium is central once again in Fredie Floré's paper, this time as a location for transatlantic diplomacy via the production and sale of licenced American furniture designs in the 1950s and 1960s. Complex diplomatic motives are evident as these modernist objects were utilized to promote not only US but also Belgian identities, in tandem with business imperatives.

Meghen Jones' paper, which also explores design's role in shaping national identities through diplomatic processes, highlights how traditional craft objects became operative in the shifting postwar relationship between Japan and the USA, modifying American perceptions of a former enemy. The operation of individual

designers within the wider frame of cultural diplomacy again comes to the fore in Claire Wintle's investigation into US involvement in establishing design education in India. She argues that this interaction was reciprocal and that Indian nationalism had a vital role in influencing the Ford Foundation. The final paper, a distillation of discussions between design historian Jonathan Woodham and design ambassador Michael Thomson, offers contemporary perspectives and analysis of the value of global ambassadorial roles within design. Together, these six papers demonstrate the strong correlation between the formalization and professionalization of design practice and design's increasing role within diplomatic processes from the Second World War to the present. But as Woodham and Thomson argue, the impact that such diplomatic exchanges through design make nationally or globally is less easy to quantify. This is something we leave for future researchers to ascertain.

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Websites:
Global Innovation Exchange https://www.globalinnovationexchange.org
Open Architecture Collaborative www.openarchcollab.org

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i For example, Renilde Steeghs (Ambassador for Cultural Cooperation at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) recently indicated that "design approaches" should be considered as significant exports as "design products," citing various examples including the "Dutch approach" to flood management disseminated to the US in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy (Steeghs 2016). We might also look, as evidence of diplomacy through design, to transnational educational partnerships such as Global Innovation Exchange, established in 2016 between University of Washington, US, and Tsinghua University, China, to launch a new program in Seattle focused on technology and design innovation.