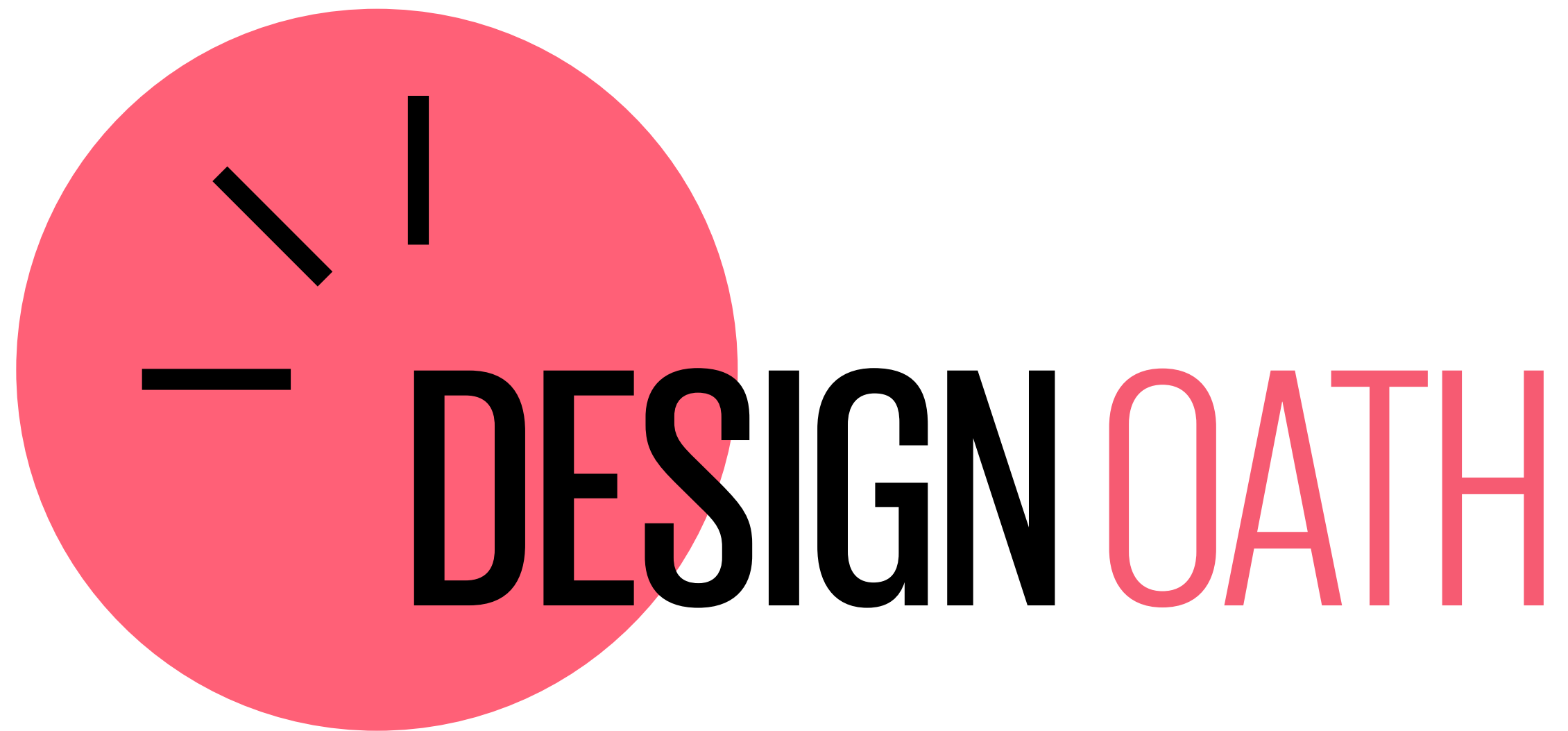
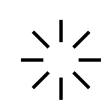




An Ethical Commitment For The Global Design Community

March 2024 – Forever *(in hopes of a better designed future)*

WDO WORLD
DESIGN
ORGANIZATION



WORLD DESIGN
YOUNG DESIGNERS CIRCLE

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About The Design Oath

The Design Oath is a global ethics initiative launched by the World Design Organization (WDO) and developed by members of the Young Designers Circle (YDC). This project aims to establish a practical and measurable ethical framework for the design profession—one that strengthens integrity, accountability, and social responsibility across diverse global contexts.

Recognizing the growing need for ethics in design, the YDC convened from around the world to examine how values shape contemporary design practice. Early research and dialogue revealed that while many existing frameworks raise awareness, they often remain theoretical and lack tools for practical application or impact measurement.

In response, the YDC committed from the outset to create a tangible, action-oriented tool—a design ethics resource that enables designers to map their work against a set of clearly defined ethical principles. This tool is intended to spark meaningful dialogue, promote ethical decision-making, and empower designers to lead change within their communities and institutions.

About The Young Designers Circle (YDC)



- Two-year global program that unites emerging designers at different stages of their careers.
- “Contributors” are typically within their first eight years of practice, while “Collaborators” are early design leaders with more experience.
- Fosters growth through leadership development, mentorship, and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Key themes such as sustainability, education, equity, ethics, and systems thinking, equipping young designers with the tools to drive positive change and shape a better future.

The 2023-2025 Cohort:

Emerging designers from various countries.

Leadership, creativity, and ethical design practices through mentorship, cross-cultural collaboration, and meaningful dialogue.

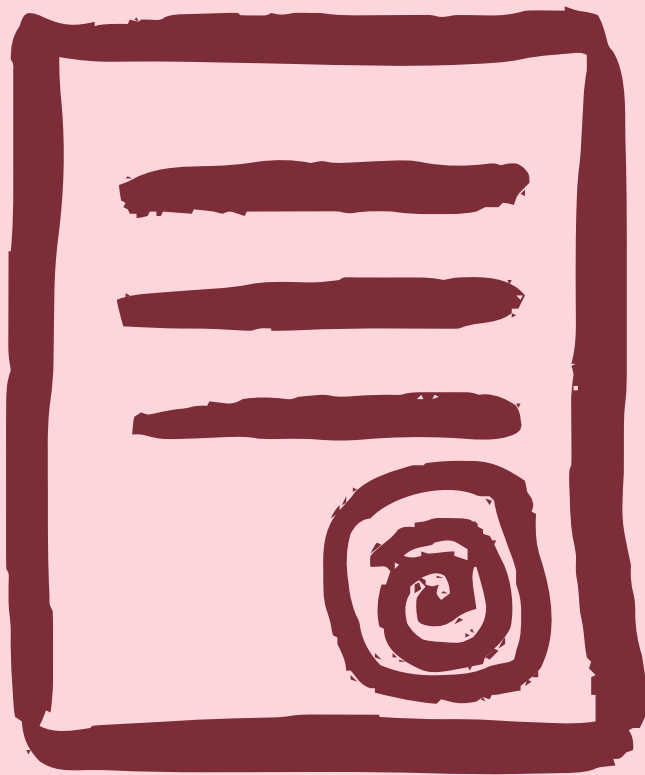
YDC members are actively working on two flagship projects:

- The Design Oath, a global ethical pledge for designers
- Next in Line podcast, which shares stories and insights from young design leaders around the world.
- And other projects including Heritage in Motion, a three-week design sprint with the goal of providing post-secondary design students an interdisciplinary and multicultural learning experience.

01

The Design Oath

Committed to Design For a Better World



As a [designer / design-led organization / institution committed to design], I / we recognize the profound impact of design. With this awareness, I / we pledge to uphold the values and responsibilities outlined in the Principles of the Design Oath.

I / We commit that during the design (process) of my/our products/services, I will consider for my design to:

- 1 Convey Effectiveness and Meaning**
- 2 Nurture Viable Business**
- 3 Ensure Reliability**
- 4 Integrate Systemic Responsibility**
- 5 Foster Systemic Regeneration**
- 6 Promote Equitable Participation**
- 7 Embrace Aesthetic Consciousness**
- 8 Harmonize Creativity-Innovation**
- 9 Drive System Synergy**

I / We will measure this either using the metrics of measurement as outlined for the Principles of the Oath for Design or...



02

The 9 Principles

What makes design truly “good”

05

Evolving Design Measurement: From Intuition to Accountability

A Strategic Shift Toward Ethical, Structured, and Future-Oriented Design Evaluation

Measurement in design has largely been informal and philosophical and designers have often relied on intuition, personal values, or discipline-specific conventions to define what constitutes good or ethical design. These discussions, while insightful, have lacked structure and offer no consistent criteria for comparison, progress tracking, or accountability. As a result, decision-making has remained subjective, outcomes inconsistent, and there has been limited reflection on long-term impact.

Our hope is that with the advent of the Design Oath, the design community is moving toward a more structured and shared language for ethical measurement.

The Design Oath Toolkit, built around nine principles that are organized into three thematic clusters and expressed in active & measurable terms, provides a clear framework for evaluating design work.

Rather than relying on vague or abstract ideals, designers can now assess whether a product or service, for example, promotes equitable participation or ensures systemic responsibility.

Through the oath, design measurement is becoming increasingly strategic and systemic, shaped by a growing awareness of time and complexity. The introduction of the Design Progression Matrix allows teams to assess their work across three interrelated temporal dimensions:

Retrospectively: by examining the historical context and legacy systems that shaped the design challenge;

Contemporarily: by evaluating immediate user impact and implementation dynamics;

Prospectively: by anticipating long-term consequences and emergent outcomes.

This approach shifts the emphasis from outputs to outcomes, enabling designers to think beyond the present and act as systems thinkers with a future-oriented mindset.

This evolution in how design is measured is essential.

Without meaningful measurement, ethical considerations remain theoretical and disconnected from real-world consequences. Embedding structured, context-aware, and time-sensitive measurement into the design process ensures accountability, reveals trade-offs, and empowers designers to create solutions that are not only effective but also just, resilient, and enduring.

Through the oath, design measurement will become increasingly strategic and systemic, shaped by a growing awareness of time and complexity.

Categorizing the Design Process

Design Foundation

This category encompasses the why and what of good design. It focuses on ensuring design is not just functional but solves meaningful problems, creates positive change, and aligns with values.

Design Responsibility

This category focuses on the how of responsible design practice. It highlights the ethical obligations of designers to consider the wider system, all stakeholders, and long-term consequences, promoting equity, sustainability, and regeneration.

Design Execution

This category emphasizes the process of achieving good design. It highlights the importance of creativity, innovation, collaboration, and iterative refinement, ensuring design is not only well-intended but also well-executed.



Principle 01

CONVEYS EFFECTIVENESS AND MEANING

Effective design solves problems with purpose. By aligning clear intent with a focused strategy, it creates solutions that work, matter, and make a lasting impact beyond the immediate need.



Principle 01

CONVEYS EFFECTIVENESS AND MEANING

ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

Key Word: Purpose

How can design support a future purpose by combining measurable outcomes and core drivers, while adapting over time and space?

Core Idea:

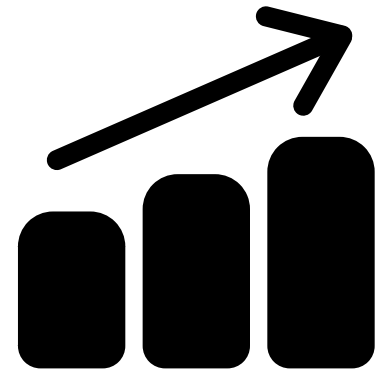
Design must solve a problem effectively and have a positive impact beyond immediate functionality. It needs a clear purpose aligned with values and be well-communicated.

Key Themes:

Purpose, Impact, Values, Problem-solving, Communication, User-centered approach, Measurable Objectives.

Metrics:

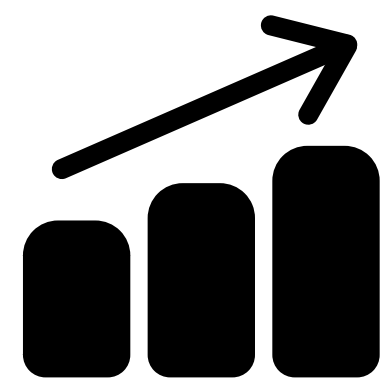
- What outcomes and drivers exist in the environment?
- How will design support a future purpose?
- How will the purpose adapt over time and space?



Principle 02

NURTURES VIABLE BUSINESS

Design isn't just about looks—it's a strategic tool that improves function, strengthens the customer experience, and sets a brand apart. A viable business is a business that runs well, stays profitable, and adapts as markets change.



Principle 02

NURTURES VIABLE BUSINESS

Core Idea:

Design is a strategic tool for business viability, enhancing functionality, customer experience, and market differentiation, leading to sustainable operations and profit.

Key Themes:

Business Viability, Financial Sustainability, Market Demand, Operational Efficiency, Adaptability, User-Centered Design, Iterative Problem-Solving, Integration with Business Strategy, Sustainability in Design, Measuring Design Impact.

Metrics:

- How are the business, assets, and brand managed?
- How will design improve finances, operations, and the market?
- What is the expected impact on finances, operations, and the market?

ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

Key Word: Economic

How are the business, assets, and brand managed, and how can design responsibly improve finances, operations, and the market to achieve the expected impact?



Principle 03

**ENSURES
RELIABILITY**

The design works reliably to build trust and meet its purpose, and maximizes valuable, relevant results that encourage further positive impact.



Principle 03

ENSURES RELIABILITY

Core Idea:

Design must be dependable and consistently functional, building trust, while also maximizing valuable outputs and positive impact.

Key Themes:

Reliability, Value, Dependability, Functionality, Consistent Performance, Valued Output, User-Centered Design, Error Handling, Maintainability, Value Metrics, Outcome-Oriented, Efficiency, Innovation, Iteration.

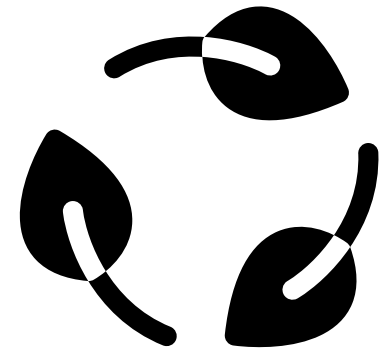
Metrics:

- How do the brand and product perform in their environment?
- How will design maintain reliability across the brand, product, and user experience?
- How will they adapt to changing system performance?

ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

Key Word: Performance

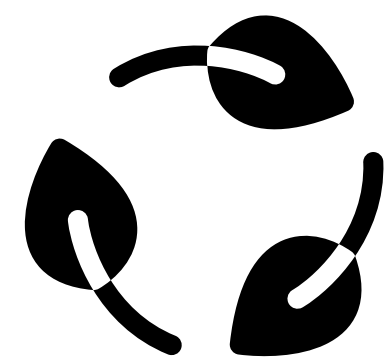
How well do the brand and product perform, and how can design keep them reliable as systems evolve?



Principle 04

INTEGRATES SYSTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

Ethical design takes full responsibility for its place in a larger system. Designers must act with care, think beyond the immediate, and consider how their choices affect people, communities, and the environment—both now and in the future.



Principle 04

INTEGRATES SYSTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

Key Word: Awareness

How can design integrate systemic responsibility to create impact at personal, community, and global levels, while staying accountable over time and across contexts?

Core Idea:

Designers are moral agents and must consider the wider system. This includes ethical perspectives, long-term consequences for all stakeholders (users, communities, environment), and sustainability.

Key Themes:

Systemic Responsibility, Ethical Design, Stakeholders, Long-Term Vision, Unintended Consequences, Diverse Perspectives, Moral Agency, Accountability, Transparency, Continuous Reflection.

Metrics:

- What impacts are present at personal, community, and global levels?
- How will design integrate systemic responsibility?
- How will it ensure accountability across time and space?



Principle 05

FOSTERS SYSTEMIC REGENERATION

Design supports lasting renewal by using regenerative principles and aligning with sustainable goals. It helps build a future that benefits the environment, society, and the economy.



Principle 05

FOSTERS SYSTEMIC REGENERATION

ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

Key Word: Governance

How can design and governance create policies and actions that restore, renew, and keep making a positive impact on people, the planet, and the economy?

Core Idea:

Design should go beyond sustainability to actively restore and enhance systems (environmental, social, economic) using regenerative principles throughout the design process.

Key Themes:

Systemic Regeneration, Sustainability, Regenerative Principles, Lifecycle Thinking, Systems Thinking, Circular Economy, Biomimicry, Passive Design, SDGs, Collaboration, Knowledge Sharing.

Metrics:

- What is the current impact on people, the planet, and the economy?
- How will design help create new ways to restore and renew systems?
- How will governance support ongoing positive change?



Principle 06

PROMOTES EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION

Design should break down barriers that prevent people from participating equally in the creation of products, services, and society. It should create opportunities that allow and encourage for internal and external collaboration, ensuring that all valid perspectives are heard. It should help consider the impacts that these products and services have on current and future resources.



Principle 06

PROMOTES EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION

ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

Key Word: Relationships

How can design break down barriers that promote participation from internal and external stakeholders during the creation of products, services, and society?

Core Idea:

Design must dismantle systemic barriers and prioritize diversity, equity, accessibility, and belonging through human-centered processes.

Key Themes:

Equitable Participation, Systemic Barriers, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Belonging, Human-Centered Design, Inclusive Research, Co-creation, Advocate for Change.

Metrics:

- How are internal and external stakeholders interacting in the system's value chain?
- How is design going to encourage equal participation, ensuring all valid perspectives are heard?
- How are the impacts of products and services going to be tracked on current and future resources?



Principle 07

EMBRACES AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Design must create solutions that go beyond their novelty; they must be consciously designed to be perceived in ways that are meaningful and responsible. This demands to consider the bigger picture: how our design solutions can be sensed by people with diverse abilities, cultural identities, and what their specific psychological effects are. Success in the aesthetics of a design requires being accountable for skillfully balancing bold exploration with responsible and effective execution.



Principle 07

EMBRACES AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

Key Word: Materiality

How can design enhance the interaction between artifact usability, function, cultural context, and user experience, while adding value to the material culture and fostering the system's aesthetic consciousness over time and space?

Core Idea:

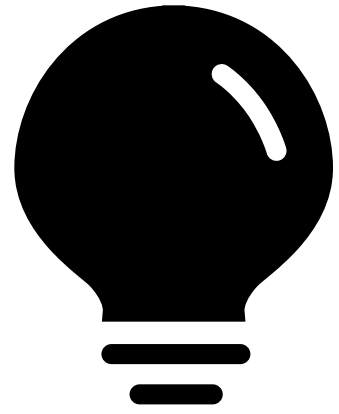
Design reaches its full potential by creating emotional resonance through crafted aesthetic experiences that connect with the target audience meaningfully.

Key Themes:

Aesthetic Consciousness, Emotional Resonance, Target Audience, Sensory Design, Neuroscience Principles, Emotional Language, Storytelling, Emotional Cues, User Research, Iteration based on Emotional Feedback.

Metrics:

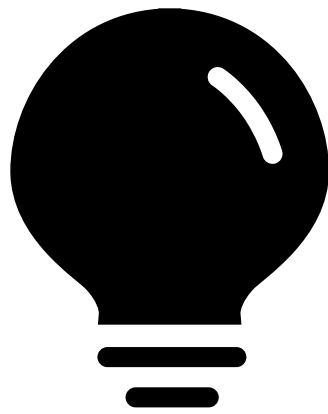
- How well do existing solutions handle ease of use, function, cultural fit, and the overall user feeling?
- In what specific ways will our new design make people's interactions with objects or spaces noticeably better?
- How will we know if this design successfully helps people (including designers) develop a deeper appreciation for the impact of aesthetic choices?



Principle 08

GOOD DESIGN HARMONIZES CREATIVITY- INNOVATION

Design must balance the expressive, exploratory nature of creativity with the strategic, implementation-focused nature of innovation to efficiently create meaningful outcomes.



Principle 08

GOOD DESIGN HARMONIZES CREATIVITY- INNOVATION

ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

Key Word: Convergence

How can design drive efficient innovation processes by managing human resources, market needs, and R&D while translating transdisciplinary, profit-focused, and creative relationships into long-term value?

Core Idea:

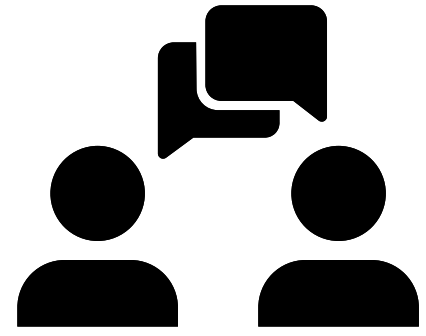
Effective design integrates both creativity and innovation to create novel, meaningful, and impactful solutions. It balances exploration with strategic implementation.

Key Themes:

Creativity, Innovation, Novelty, Value Creation, Strategic Implementation, Divergent & Convergent Thinking, Inspiration, Iteration, Market & Context, Collaboration.

Metrics:

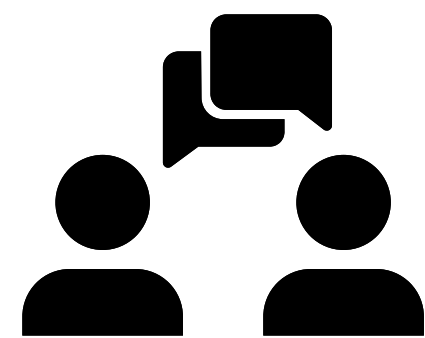
- How are human resources, market needs, and the R&D process managed in the innovation environment?
- How is design going to converge into efficient innovation processes?
- How will transdisciplinary, profit-focused, and creative relationships be translated into value throughout time and space?



Principle 09

DRIVES SYSTEM SYNERGY

Ethical design grows from clear communication and teamwork. Through purposeful dialogue and collaboration, it builds understanding, creates shared value, and achieves common goals.



Principle 09

DRIVES SYSTEM SYNERGY

ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

Key Word: Orchestration

How can design enhance partnerships within the system that is responsible for the creation of value (that is derived from products and services)? How can designers ensure that these partnerships improve collaboration while also making net positive impact?

Core Idea:

Ethical designs emerge from communication and collaboration. It's a process fostering mutual understanding, shared value, and common goals.

Key Themes:

Synergy, Collaboration, Communication, Purposeful Dialogue, Active Listening, Clear Communication, Feedback Loops, Constructive Criticism, Shared Goals, Diverse Perspectives, Co-creation, Teamwork, User-Centered Value, Stakeholder Value.

Metrics:

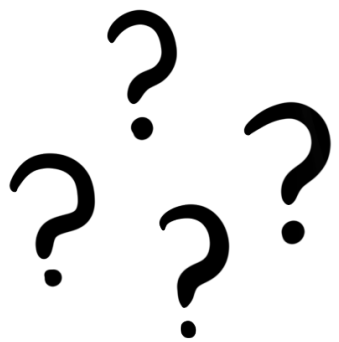
- How are collaboration culture, effective communication, and interconnection values affecting the synergy within the system?
- How is design going to enhance systemic partnerships and value creation?
- How will the system's partnership culture be impacted by systemic intervention?

03

The Process of Creation

How we got here

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The Beginning of This Project

Being selected into the 2023-2025 Cohort of the Young Designer’s Circle

“What is a well-designed assault rifle?”

The process began by organizing YDC collaborators into various working groups based on time zones. Each group was asked to respond to the provocative question: “What is a well-designed assault rifle, and what is its impact on the world—from extremely negative to extremely positive?” These responses were mapped along an ethical spectrum to frame moral perspectives in design.

The groups met weekly, supplemented by ad-hoc sessions and monthly meetings with facilitators. Each team conducted and reported on their research which became the base of the creation the Design Oath.

The research unfolded in three key phases:

- 1. **Immersion** – A deep exploration into the concept of a design oath, raising foundational questions (how, who, why, what, when, where) and studying interpretations of the Hippocratic Oath across disciplines.
- 2. **Thematization** – Organizing questions and insights into key themes through a process of affinization.
- 3. **Research Planning** – Clarifying what each group aimed to discover, why it mattered, what data was needed, who was responsible, and timelines for completion.

Upon completion, findings were consolidated and analyzed through core inquiry dimensions—why, how, who, where, when, and what. This resulted in 260 research posts, which were synthesized into strategic development areas for the Design Oath. These included:

- Mission, vision, purpose, and impact
- Justification for a design oath
- Designers’ self-reflection
- Sources of inspiration
- Identification of key partners and stakeholders
- Global understanding of design
- Ethics in design and business
- Importance of global consensus and adaptability
- Creation, distribution, and future revision of the oath
- Implementation and Adherence
- Consequences of non-compliance
- Long-term impact on design practice

A structured timeline then guided the project - it was broken down to go from internal alignment on the purpose, vision, and mission, all the way to gathering feedback through workshops and public presentations.

Secondary Research

“How do you define ‘design’ and ‘good’ design?”

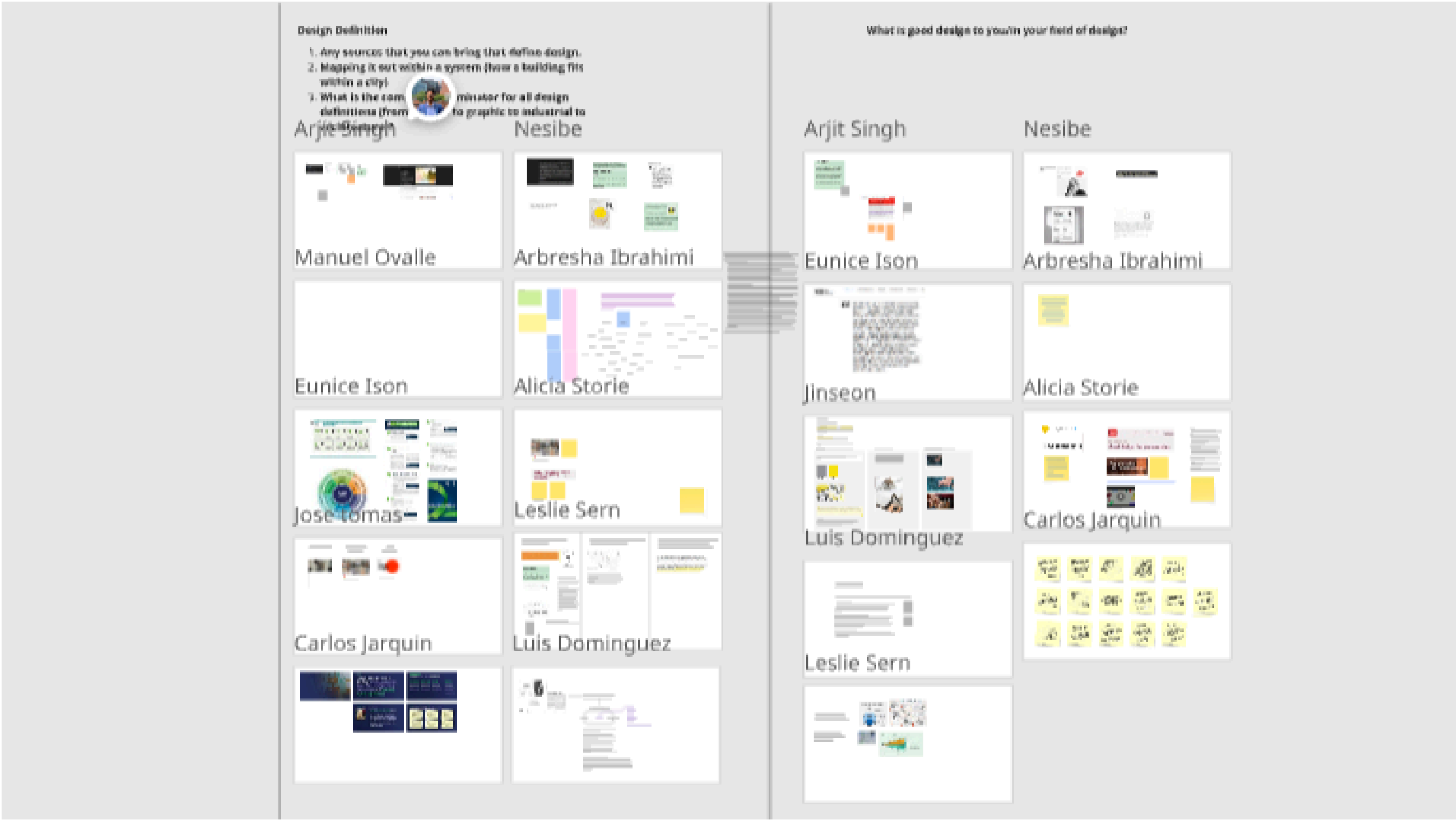
The various disciplines within design

An in-depth analysis was conducted on materials from various design disciplines, focusing on the concept of source mapping. This exploration included diverse resources such as the etymology of the word "design," formal definitions, academic interpretations, and professional practices across different contexts.

Through this comprehensive research, we identified a common denominator across all definitions of design—a conceptual foundation that helps us understand the essence of design beyond disciplinary or cultural differences.

Subsequently, examples of "good design" from different disciplines were collected. These were examined to uncover not only their positive aspects but also their negative consequences, with a focus on identifying gaps and proposing ways these ideas could be improved and made more successful.

This analysis led to the facilitation of an internal workshop for the collaborative group at YDC.



Primary Research

“How do you define ‘design’ and ‘good’ design?”

Our work has consequences

The session began with a **Socratic dialogue**, drawing on insights from a prior design sprint focused on the ethical implications of design.

We revisited core questions such as:

- **What is design?**
- **Why does design significantly impact people’s lives and society?**
- **Should designers be responsible for the consequences of their work?**
- **Is there a need for a formal set of ethical guidelines in design?**

Through open dialogue and reflection, the team aimed to extract key themes, reformulate hypotheses, and conduct root cause analysis to explore the foundational need for ethical design principles.

The group then engaged in a **"Statement Lab"** activity to craft concise answers to three essential questions:

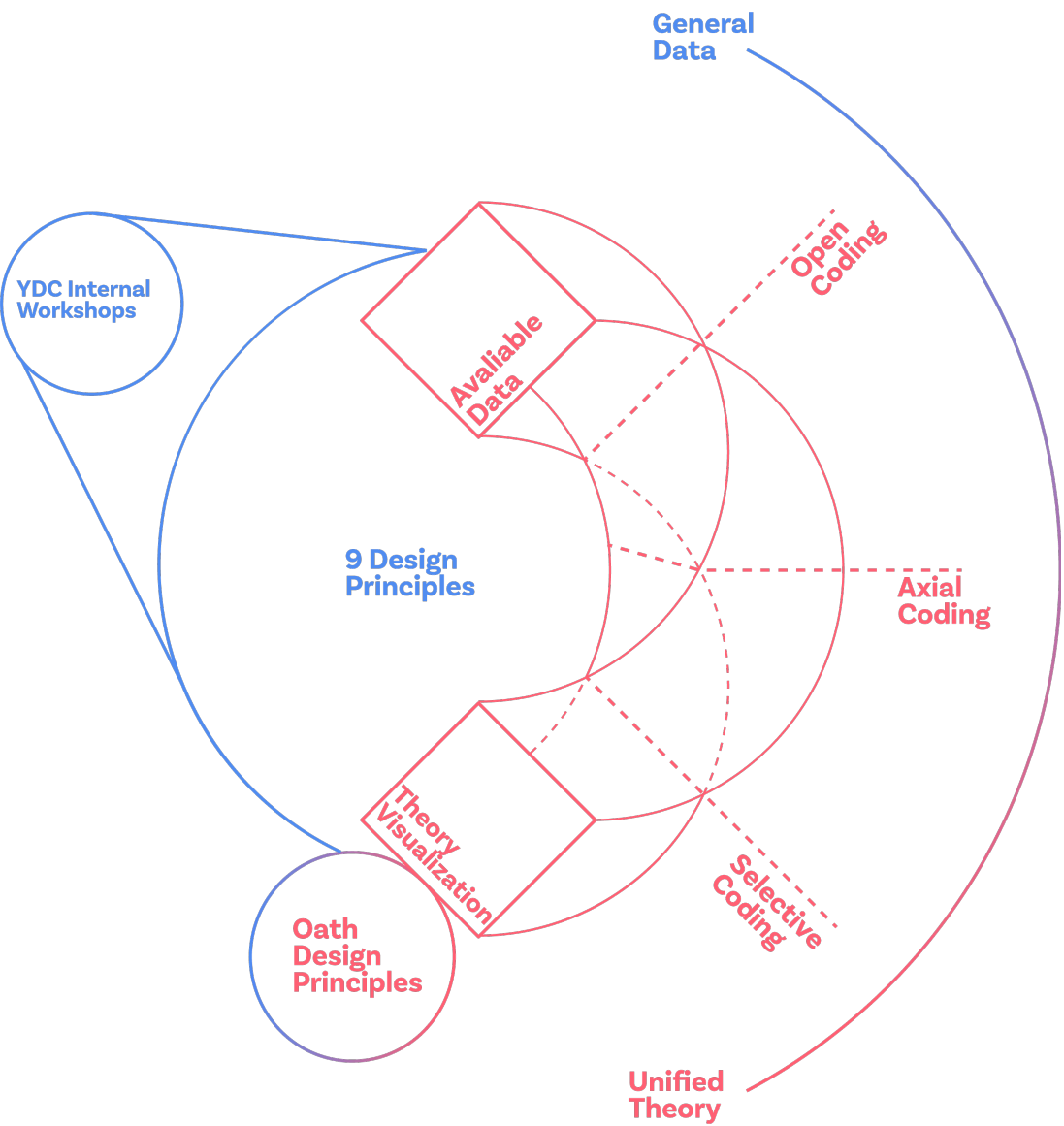
1. **Why does design need an oath?**
2. **What is the primary purpose of this oath?**
3. **What specific problem or gap does this address in the design field?**

The meeting concluded with the drafting of a purpose statement, laying a strong foundation for consensus around the project’s mission.

The workshop's insights were structured using **Grounded Theory**, a qualitative research methodology that develops concepts and hypotheses directly from data. This involved a systematic process of:

- **Open coding** to label emerging concepts
- **Axial coding** to identify relationships between them
- **Selective coding** to extract overarching themes

This approach ensured representation of all perspectives and helped identify key issues and motivations.



YDC's Definition of Design

Design is a skill/process of creation, implementation, and communication of a strategy that helps achieve a specific goal.



Results

“How do you define ‘design’ and ‘good’ design?”

Themes within the research:

The Socratic analysis revealed five primary themes:

- 1. The Power and Influence of Design**
Designs shapes individual behavior, social norms, and environmental outcomes.
- 2. Ethical Gaps and Unintended Consequences**
The lack of standardized ethical frameworks risks negative societal impacts.
- 3. Agency and Accountability**
Designers seek to move beyond execution to responsible authorship of solutions.
- 4. Need for a Universal Ethical Framework**
A shared ethical language and principles are crucial across cultures and industries.
- 5. Role of Education, Communication, and Advocacy**
Integrating ethics into design education and practice is essential.

A key focus of the discussion was the development of measurable standards for ethical design. We understood that there is a need for:

- **Objective metrics**
- **Transparent evaluation systems**
- **Long-term tracking of social and environmental impact**

Such metrics are seen as vital for moving ethical design from theoretical ideals to practical application.

The first phase of the workshop provides compelling evidence for the creation of an Oath for Designers. The findings reflect shared concerns about the unchecked power of design, current ethical shortcomings, and the desire for accountability and structured ethical guidance.

As a result, we developed a clear **Mission, Vision, and Purpose** to guide the formation of a holistic framework for ethical design practice.

Mission

Design has the power to create a positive impact on the world by shaping behaviors, cultures and society in order to promote accountability, sustainability, and inclusivity. It also has the risks of underestimating and neglecting the broader impact of its execution leading to harm and inequity. Therefore, we need to standardize objective, grounded and measurable ethical guidelines that can be easily implemented in the practice of design to ensure design is intentionally and consistently leveraged to benefit all stakeholders—humans and beyond.

Vision

We want designers to embrace their agency and accountability, confidently leveraging their skills to create products, services, and systems that prioritize sustainability, inclusivity, and the well-being of all beings, both in the present and in the future.

Purpose

To create and follow guidelines so we can design for positive impact. This vision is driven by the conviction that ethical design is not an option, but a necessity for a just and thriving planet.

References and Further Reading

While this list is not exhaustive, it's a start for anyone wanting to continue their exploration for these topics. Our team used some of these to gain a deeper understanding of these topics and create the questions for the Oath toolkit.

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Feedback

“We’re not the first to do a project like this, and we probably won’t be the last.”

Design Research Survey

We gathered feedback from external design stakeholders to validate and refine the outcomes of internal workshop through a survey. A small group of participants were asked to respond in three categories —Positive, Interesting, and Negative—and to share their own definition of design if it differed from ours. Their responses helped assess the clarity, relevance, and impact of the Oath.

The feedback revealed strong support for the Oath’s holistic, inclusive approach and its emphasis on ethics, sustainability, and accountability.

Positive

Respondents liked its potential to raise awareness, especially among new designers, and unify the profession under shared ethical values. The emphasis on long-term impact, social responsibility, and user-centered design was especially well received.

Interesting

Observations included the lack of reference to legal or regulatory frameworks, and questions around the pairing of “purpose” and “problem-solving.” Others found the focus on emotional and aesthetic appeal insightful and welcomed the inclusion of non-human stakeholders and future generations in the ethical scope of design.

Negative

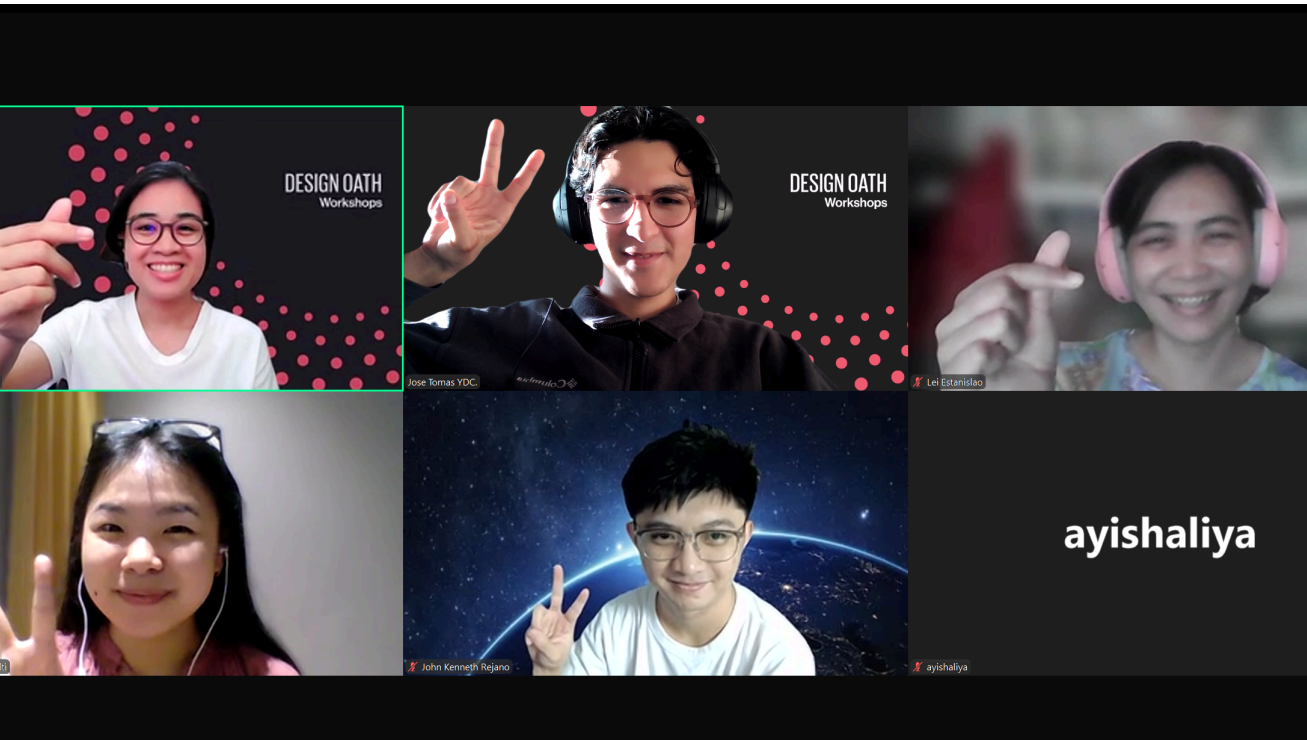
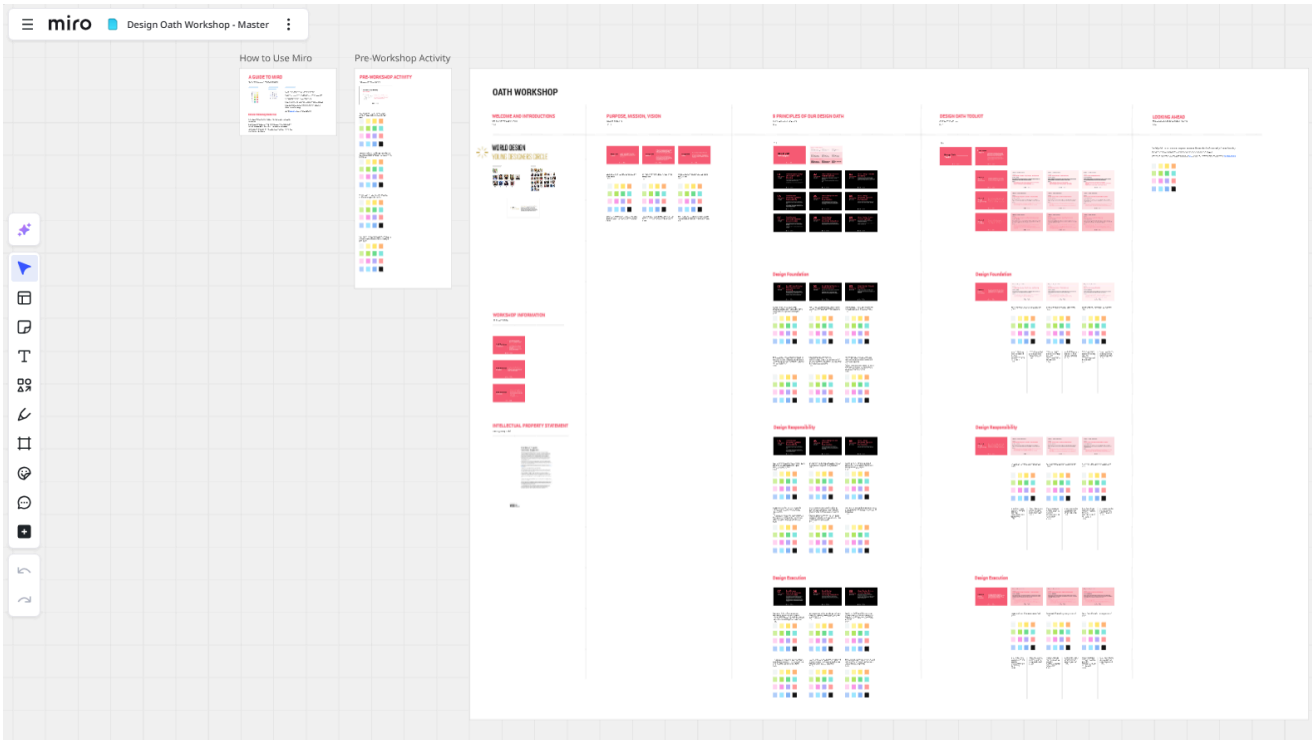
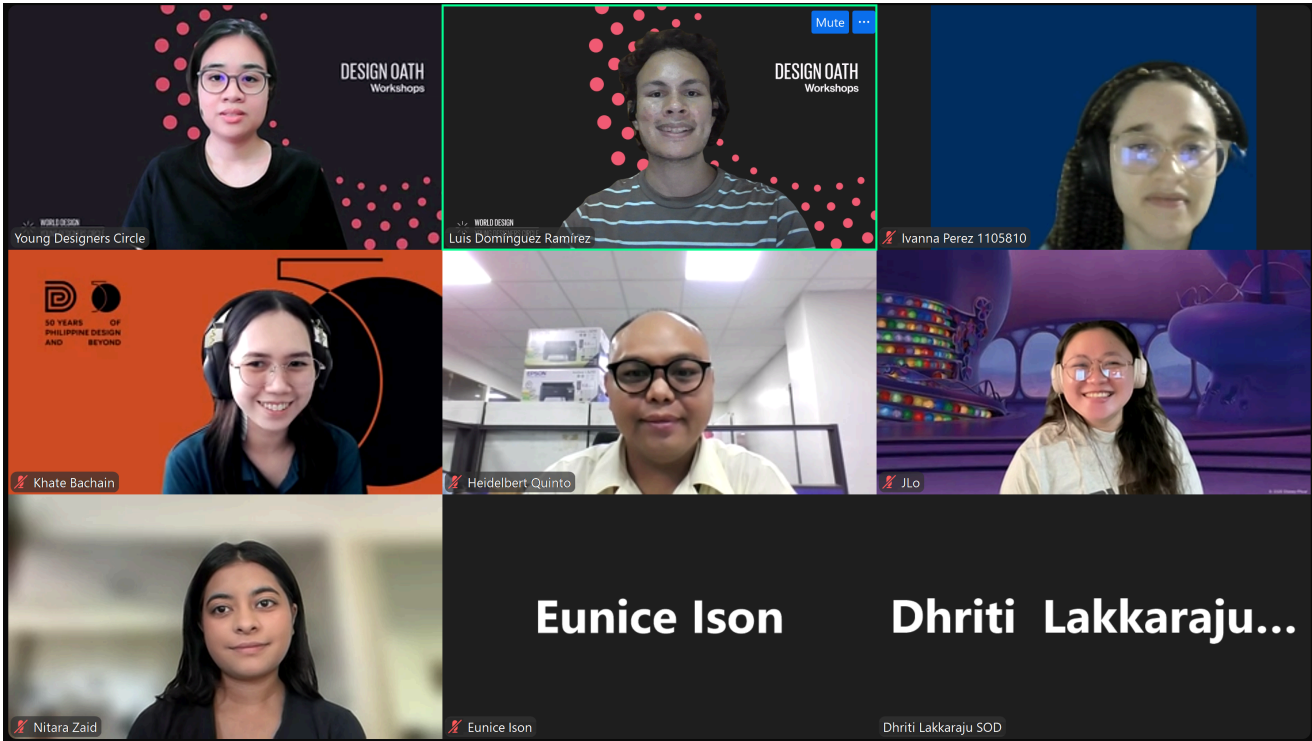
Critical feedback focused on clarity and applicability. Some found the language too generic or non-committal, with terms like “considers” making the principles feel optional. The term “business alignment” sparked concern for reinforcing capitalist structures, and a few worried the Oath might limit creativity or be too complex for early-career designers.

Several participants suggested expanding the definition of design to better reflect cultural context, user needs, and quality of life improvements. While most agreed with the spirit of the current definition, they advocated for more inclusivity across disciplines.

Global Workshops for Feedback

Discussing the principles of the Oath with a global group of individuals

The workshop facilitated an engaging and insightful exchange among a globally diverse group of designers and professionals, who discussed and critically reflected on the nine principles of the Design Oath. Through interactive sessions and collaborative exercises, participants explored how these principles apply in their local contexts, shared real-world examples, identified barriers to implementation, and offered thoughtful feedback. This inclusive dialogue helped surface common themes—such as future impact, accessibility, inclusivity, and systemic thinking—highlighting both shared challenges and unique cultural perspectives that will shape the ongoing evolution of the Design Oath.



Global Workshops

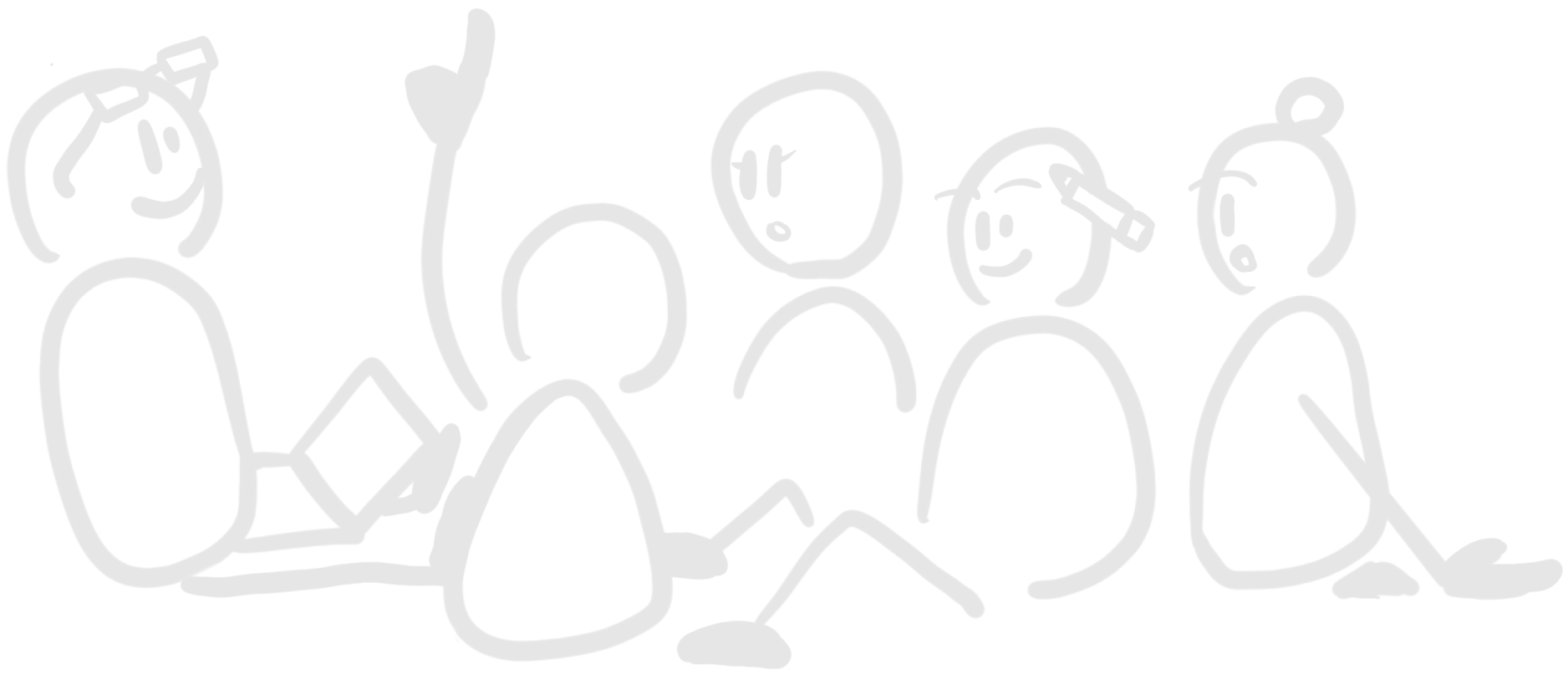
Discussing the principles of the Oath with a global group of individuals

The Design Oath Workshop, held from March 24 to 28, 2025, brought together designers, educators, and professionals from around the world to improve and strengthen the Design Oath. The workshop focused on gathering practical feedback, clarifying the Oath’s mission and principles, and exploring how to apply it in everyday design work. Participants engaged in thoughtful discussions, shared real-world examples, and contributed to group exercises aimed at identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and future opportunities of the Oath.

Participants emphasized the need for the Design Oath to be inclusive, globally relevant, and adaptable to different cultural and economic contexts. They called for a sharper definition of the designer’s role in shaping a sustainable future and navigating the tension between ethical practice and commercial pressure. The revised mission and vision now better reflect this global perspective. Participants also highlighted the importance of measurable impact and accountability, particularly through tools like life cycle analysis, stakeholder feedback, and long-term evaluation.

Specific principles were explored in focused groups, leading to valuable insights. Designers called for stronger emphasis on circular design, social equity, collaboration, and the need to involve non-designers in ethical decisions. Challenges such as lack of funding, policy support, and tools for tracking ethical progress were commonly mentioned. Despite these barriers, participants shared innovative practices already in use—such as regenerative design, inclusive co-creation, and sustainable material sourcing—that align with the Oath’s goals.

Looking ahead, the workshop reinforced the importance of the Design Oath as a living document. Participants committed to applying it in their work and sharing it within their organizations. Many expressed interest in contributing to future workshops and developing localized versions of the Oath. The workshop succeeded in strengthening the Oath’s foundations and building a global network of advocates committed to ethical, responsible, and impactful design.



04

Global Use

Now and Into the Future

Your Take on the Oath

Using the Oath and helping us refine it

By engaging with the Design Oath, you contribute to shaping a shared understanding of what makes design truly “good.” Your insights help us refine the principles to reflect the complexities of our world and of impactful design.

While we really appreciate all your support so far, there’s more work to be done. This project can only truly be successful if we accept it, use it, and critique it.

The most up-to-date Instructions on how to go through the Design Oath Toolkit can be found by visiting:

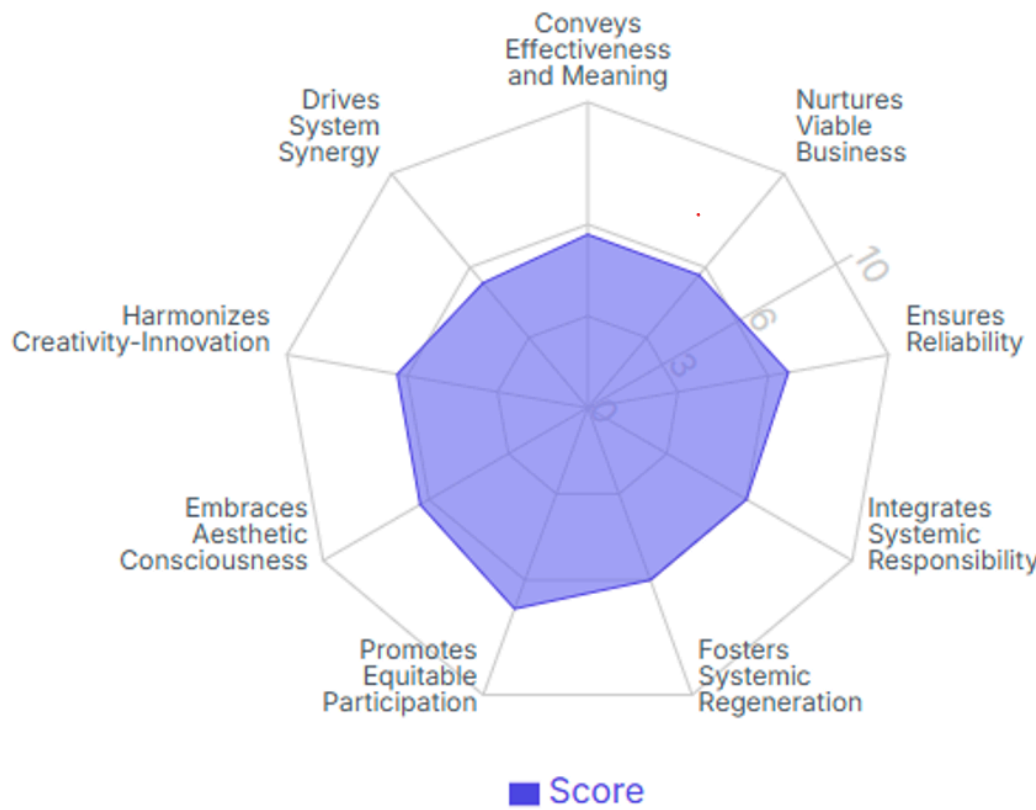
<https://wdo.org/programmes/young-designers-circle/young-designers-circle-2023-2025/design-oath/>

The first version of the Oath, as it stands, lets you measure your project against the 9 principles of the Design Oath. By answering 30 yes/no questions each, divided into: Retrospective, Contemporary, and Foresight sections for each principle, you receive a score in a graphical format representing your project’s performance over time for that principle.

When the 30 questions are answered for all 9 principles (270 questions total) a spider chart is generated based on averages of the time graphs.

Over time, as you make adjustments to your project and retake the 270 questions, you will be able to compare your performance to an older spider chart.

Principle Overview



Your Take on the Oath

Using the Oath and helping us refine it

Examples

Next, we’re sharing an example on how we believe the Design Oath may be used.

For this, we’re using “**LoopBike**”, a fictional bikeshare service program that is explored through the lens of each principle of the Design Oath. The questions answered here are to be used as a starting point for your conversations when building products or services; We discussed these before the toolkit was formed.

(Please note that this should not act as a strict guide, but as support to your efforts of using the Oath. In it’s current form (v1), the toolkit only allows for yes/no questions. Over time, this may change to incorporate more open ended questions. Our hope is that going through these questions will help you design with intent.)



LoopBike

The Bike Share Service

Principle 01: Conveys Effectiveness and Meaning

How does LoopBike solve a problem effectively and with purpose?

LoopBike isn't just about renting bikes—it's a smart solution tackling real city problems. It offers affordable, green transport that helps ease traffic jams, gets people moving healthier, and cuts down pollution. It's designed with big-picture goals in mind, like making cities cleaner and encouraging healthier lifestyles.

What tangible drivers and intangible outcomes are present?

You can see more bikes ready to ride, stations placed where people actually need them, and an app that's convenient to use. But beyond that, people start choosing bikes over cars, feel proud to be part of a community that cares about the environment, and trust the system more because it's designed around their needs.

How does design foster a prospective purpose?

LoopBike listens and learns. The system is adjusted based on how many bikes go where, based on real usage. It's built to grow and adapt as cities change, so it stays useful and relevant for years to come.

LoopBike

The Bike Share Service

Principle 02: Nurtures Viable Business

How are the business, assets, and brand being managed?

LoopBike’s business and design work hand in hand. The brand is clean, simple, and feels urban — easy to recognize and trust. Bikes and stations are made to last and easy to fix, which saves money. The app helps run things smoothly—from managing inventory to payments—making the service easier for both users and operators.

How will design improve finances, operations, and the market?

Using standard parts and weatherproof materials means less spending on repairs. The app lets users pay quickly and offers perks for loyal riders. On the operations side, real-time data helps move bikes around so they’re always where people want them. Plus, the brand can tweak its look and services to fit different cities, making it feel local.

What is the expected impact on finances, operations, and the market?

Good design means happier customers who keep coming back, less downtime, and better use of resources. LoopBike can grow into new cities without losing the personal touch that users love, all while keeping costs manageable.

LoopBike

The Bike Share Service

Principle 03: Ensures Reliability

How are the brand and artifact performing in the environment?

LoopBike is built tough. Bikes can handle rough roads and all kinds of weather, and the brand stands for being dependable and easy to use. Users can count on the app and stations working smoothly, no matter where they are.

How does design ensure reliability across brand, artifact, and customer experience?

The bikes have sturdy tires and GPS so they don't get stolen. The app shows up-to-date bike availability and sends alerts if anything goes wrong. For users, the system is straightforward—scanning a code, getting help if needed, and knowing their trip will go as planned.

How will they adapt to changing system performance?

LoopBike keeps improving by watching how people use it and where problems pop up. The app gets regular updates with new features, and the look stays familiar but can include local touches.

LoopBike

The Bike Share Service

Principle 04: Integrates Systemic Responsibility

What impacts are present at personal, community, and global levels?

Individually, LoopBike gives people a cheap and healthy way to get around. For communities, it reduces traffic and pollution, especially in places that need it most. Globally, it helps fight climate change by cutting carbon emissions and pushing cities toward cleaner transport.

How does design integrate systemic responsibility?

LoopBike involves the community in decisions, uses sustainable materials, and respects user privacy by keeping data safe and anonymous. It's designed to think beyond just today, planning for a greener, fairer future.

How is responsibility addressed across time and space?

The system changes with the city's needs and makes sure everyone benefits, not just those in wealthy areas. Bikes last longer because they're built to be fixed and recycled. It's about caring for both the planet and the people.

LoopBike

The Bike Share Service

Principle 05: Fosters Systemic Regeneration

What is the current impact on people, the planet, and the economy?

Individually, LoopBike gives people a cheap and healthy way to get around. For communities, it reduces traffic and pollution, especially in places that need it most. Globally, it helps fight climate change by cutting carbon emissions and pushing cities toward cleaner transport.

How will design help create new ways to restore and renew systems?

LoopBike involves the community in decisions, uses sustainable materials, and respects user privacy by keeping data safe and anonymous. It's designed to think beyond just today, planning for a greener, fairer future.

How will governance support ongoing positive change?

LoopBike thrives when city policies actively support it—through safe bike lane networks, affordable pricing regulations, and integration with public transit. By investing in infrastructure, incentivizing sustainable transport, and protecting accessibility for all income levels, governance ensures LoopBike continues to benefit people, the planet, and the economy for years to come.

LoopBike

The Bike Share Service

Principle 06: Promotes Equitable Participation

How are internal and external stakeholders interacting in the system's value chain?

LoopBike brings together everyone from city officials to riders and community advocates. Inside the team, people from different departments work closely to include social impact in decisions. Outside, partnerships help make sure the system is fair and accessible.

How is design going to encourage equal participation, ensuring all valid perspectives are heard?

Before launching anywhere new, LoopBike talks directly to locals, especially underserved groups, to hear their needs and concerns. The bikes and app are designed to be easy for everyone, with features for accessibility and affordable pricing options.

How are the impacts of products and services going to be tracked on current and future resources?

LoopBike keeps listening even after launch. It works with local groups to improve the system, test new features, and advocate for better bike infrastructure. Some partners even help run or maintain parts of the system, building shared ownership.

LoopBike

The Bike Share Service

Principle 07: Embraces Aesthetic Consciousness

How well do existing solutions handle ease of use, function, cultural fit, and the overall user feeling?

LoopBike’s look and feel are designed to be both practical and welcoming. The bright colors keep riders safe and visible, while the design feels modern but not intimidating. The app and physical elements use clear icons and cues that work for different languages and tech skills.

How does design add value to the artifact's material culture?

Materials are chosen not just to last, but to feel good—soft grips, smooth frames. The bike and stations are part of the city’s fabric, designed to look like friendly urban furniture, not just machines. This makes people want to embrace them as their primary mode of transportation.

How is the system’s aesthetic consciousness embraced and fostered across time and space?

LoopBike adapts its look based on where it’s used, respecting local culture and feedback. Updates improve not only function but how people feel using it—making it more intuitive and pleasant.

LoopBike

The Bike Share Service

Principle 08: Good Design Harmonizes Creativity-Innovation

How are human resources, market needs, and the R&D process managed in the innovation environment?

LoopBike’s team mixes creatives, engineers, planners, and scientists who all bring different ideas to the table. They keep a close eye on what users want and how cities are changing. Their experiments include new hardware and smart tech to improve energy use and bike distribution.

How does design converge into efficient innovation processes?

From dreaming big ideas to testing and refining, LoopBike uses quick, agile cycles. They work with city leaders and communities to make sure innovation fits real needs. When something works, they scale it carefully, tailoring it for each city.

How do transdisciplinary, profit-focused, and creative relationships translate into value over time and space?

Different experts bring their strengths—designers create vision, engineers build scalable tech, business folks find ways to make the service sustainable long term, and city partners ensure it fits local rules and fairness. This mix keeps LoopBike fresh, effective, and financially healthy.

LoopBike

The Bike Share Service

Principle 09: Drives System Synergy

How are collaboration culture, effective communication, and interconnection values affecting the synergy within the system?

LoopBike thrives on teamwork. It brings city officials, advocates, tech teams, and riders into the same conversation. Open workshops, feedback tools, and clear communication keep everyone on the same page, so decisions balance user needs and city goals. Sharing data and listening to riders builds trust and lets everyone improve the system. It's also connected to other transport modes, making the whole city's mobility smarter and more efficient.

How is design going to enhance systemic partnerships and value creation?

Design helps everyone co-create solutions and keeps feedback flowing, so partners feel ownership. By thinking about how everything connects, LoopBike becomes a vital part of the city's bigger transport picture.

How will the system's partnership culture be impacted by systemic intervention?

Instead of working in silos, partners become a team with shared goals. Design makes collaboration visible and valued, turning LoopBike from a bike rental into a platform that pushes forward city-wide mobility innovation.

05 Getting Involved

Call to action for:

- Individuals
- Educational Institutions
- Organizations and Governing Bodies

How to take the Oath

Individuals

Personal Reflection

It all starts with a will to do better. This is your chance to question your work and make adjustments as you move ahead.

Do you currently think about principles of the design oath as part of your design process in any form? If not, why not? (And how can you do better?)

Involvement

- Encourage peers to support the Oath by using the principles within their work.
- If you work as a designer at a firm, inform others about the Design Oath
- Join discussions and ongoing efforts from future YDC's.

How to take the Oath

Educational Institutions

Personal Reflection

It all starts with a will to do better. This is your chance to question your work and make adjustments as you move ahead.

Do the educators at your institution discuss the principles of the design oath as part of your design/teaching process? If not, why not? (And how can you do better?)

Embed Into Curricula and/or Host Events

Teach/discuss principles of the oath with students.

Incorporate Impact Discussions

Help raise awareness of design's impact and make students passionate about design for impact. Incorporate impact discussions into the timeline for design projects and encourage the use of the Oath principles to continue discussions about ethical design.

Involvement

- Join discussions and ongoing efforts from future YDC's
- Encourage students to support the Oath by using the principles within their work.

How to take the Oath

Organizations

Personal Reflection

It all starts with a will to do better. This is your chance to question your work and make adjustments as you move ahead.

Do the designers and business leaders at your organization discuss the principles of the design oath as part of your design/iteration process? If not, why not? (And how can you do better?)

Involvement

- Start with yourself and expand to others.
- Encourage designers at your organization to support the Oath by using the principles within their work.
- Join discussions and ongoing efforts from future YDC's
- Have the ethical design discussions with business leaders at your organization and push for collective efforts across divisions.

How to take the Oath

Governing Bodies

While as young designers, we're not at the stage to guide government practices, we think it may be helpful for governments to:

- Align policy recommendations with the Oath's principles.
- Fund or support research and policy innovation related to ethical design and long-term sustenance rather than rapid short-term growth.
- Help shape industry-wide codes of practice that reflect Oath values.

It's important to consider the negative implications that a project like this may have on growing economies which often focus on rapid growth, which can lead to short-term thinking.

06

Next Steps

The future of the Design Oath

Ideas to Formalize The Oath as a Standard For Design

Institutionalization and Formalization

As we look to the future, we envision the Oath being deeper integrated into the structures that shape design practice. When the Oath first started to take shape, we discussed as a team how hard it can be to follow principles when they are not embedded into education and organizational practices.

Through internal discussions and listening to the stories of various workshop participants, we realized that for the Oath to make a difference in the world, it may have to take a more formalized approach — institutionalizing and providing certifications that revolve around the Oath principles were briefly discussed as good next steps.

By embedding the Oath's principles into design education, professional codes, and organizational values, we hope to create a shared foundation across various disciplines and context. Formalized models could offer a way for individuals, companies, and institutions to demonstrate their commitment to ethical design. Beyond recognition, they could encourage a culture of reflection and continuous improvement within the design field.

Change and Evolution

As the world evolves, the oath will have to evolve with it too. While an effort has been made to think about the longevity of the Oath, we are firm believers that design grows with feedback. While the principles may work well for the time we are in now, we understand that these will have to change with time.

This is where future cohorts of the YDC will come into play. We also understand that since this is only the first iteration of the oath, that you, as an individual, organization, educational institution, or governing body will adapt this to your needs. Our hope is that with time, we are able to refine this to fit your needs even better.

The Principles of the Design Oath may never be perfect.

The Risk Involved with Standardization

Perfection can probably only be achieved with absolute standardization, but in design, the pursuit of perfection carries huge consequences. While standardization offers consistency and efficiency, it can also suppress the very qualities that make design meaningful: creativity and diversity.

When we associate “correctness” with a single method or aesthetic, we risk creating environments, products, and systems that feel sterile, disconnected, or exclusionary. Standardization can destroy the richness of local traditions, erase minority perspectives, and prioritize functionality over emotional effects.

We understand that a rigid standard may discourage experimentation and impose dominant values under the name of “best practices,” and variety is a reflection of the world's complexity. The diversity in design solutions brings moments of surprise, nostalgia, or empathy that connect us with our emotions. Diversity drives creativity.

Thus, the challenge lies in balancing these shared ethical standards with the freedom for designers to respond to human needs in creative ways. The Oath is not meant to limit creativity, it's supposed to help feed it.

07

Acknowledgements

Contributors, Partners, and Supporters

81



Our Deepest Gratitude

To those that have participated, and those that will do so in the future.

WDO Secretariat

This project would not have taken shape or reached this stage without the invaluable support, guidance, and regular supervision of Natalie Dutil, Communications Manager, and Sarah Virgini, Programmes & Communications Officer. We owe them both our deepest gratitude for their dedication and continuous encouragement throughout the process.

WDO Leadership

We would also like to sincerely thank YDC coaches Owen Foster and Verena Paepcke-Hjeltness and the Board Members of the WDO for their thoughtful advice and readiness to assist us during the development of the Design Oath.

WDO Members and Other Active Supporters

A heartfelt thank you goes to all other WDO Members and other supporters who contributed directly or indirectly to this journey. We are grateful to all active participants who joined the events organized for the Design Oath. Your insights, suggestions, and feedback have played a vital role in shaping and improving the quality of this project.

08 Reflections

A heart to heart with the next cohort
of the YDC and the rest of the World

Emotions from The YDC Cohort 2023-2025

To the YDC cohorts that come after us,

Being a member of the YDC reminded us that design isn't just about finding solutions; it's also about taking responsibility, having the courage to ask tough questions, the bravery to challenge the norm, and having a vision to imagine things that don't exist yet.

We didn't know everything, but we came curious, determined, and ready to design with people, not just for them. We tackled difficult problems, collaborated across cultures, and made room for both thinking and doing.

Take what we started and make it your own. Question everything. Strengthen the weak areas. Appreciate the progress. And don't be afraid to experiment, fail, and adapt. There is no checklist for ethics. It's a way of thinking. The Oath should be your guide, not your prison.

This project must always incorporate a conversation with the future—it must help us move in the direction of the world we want to create.

To the rest of the World,

Without you, this project will never be successful. While we've laid out the groundwork for what the Design Oath could become, its true power lies not in what we've created, but in how it is lived, challenged, and shaped by the wider design community. The Oath is not a fixed declaration—it is an evolving invitation to reimagine the role of design in society, and to hold ourselves accountable to the futures we help build.

We started this journey with questions—about ethics, responsibility, and the systems we participate in as designers. What emerged was a collective effort fueled by many voices across continents, disciplines, and perspectives. This process reminded us that design is never neutral, and that its impact ripples far beyond intention.

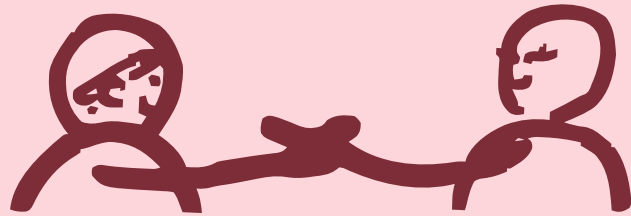
We now pass this forward to you—with openness, humility, and hope. Let the Oath become yours. Help us continue refining it, critiquing it, and bringing it to life in practice, policy, and pedagogy. Whether you are an individual creator, an institution, or a policymaker, your participation and support matters. Only together can we define what “good” design means for a just, inclusive, and sustainable world.

**With great optimism,
The YDC Oath Team (Cohort 2023-25)**

09

Stay Connected

A Collective Effort Ahead



2023-2025 Cohort of the YDC that Started This Project

Content Subheader



Arbresha Ibrahim

An architect and assistant professor at the International Balkan University in Skopje, she focuses on museum architecture and urban regeneration, blending academic research with professional practice. Her work is dedicated to designing inclusive, innovative spaces that enhance urban identity and foster cultural engagement.

in

This project envisions and develops measurement, ethics, and design as a unified, active path toward responsible and impactful practice. I'm fully engaged in making this vision a reality.



Arjit Singh

Arjit is a problem solver dedicated to bettering the world through design. With his diverse design and CX experiences, he champions a holistic approach, evaluating ecosystems pre-product design. He believes that understanding the human-world interaction well (action-reaction) is one of the most important skills to create successful products and services.

in

Designers have a much bigger responsibility than we give ourselves credit for; Design is probably the most crucial field that can bring lasting impact to this world and this project is just a small piece of that.



Eunice Ison

Eunice is an Industrial Designer and MBA graduate, dedicated to creating positive changes and impactful solutions. Founder of Eu.Nik Industrial Design Services, a design service firm that develops products, services and business strategies. Owner of Skrumbl, a dessert food and beverage experience selling joy in every cup.

in

Through the Design Oath I hope we ignite young designers to design for a better world, that enables people and planet to flourish together.



Jinseon Lee

Jinseon Lee is an industrial designer balancing functionality and aesthetics with user-centered focus. She loves collaborating with people from diverse backgrounds to solve everyday problems through design.

in

In a rapidly changing world, it's essential for designers to have core pillars they value to remain centered. I hope this helps young designers to stay grounded.



José Tomás

José is a Chilean Industrial Designer with a master's degree from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and currently pursuing an MSc in Systemic Design at Politecnico di Torino. He is committed to enhancing user experiences and company value propositions through agile, collaborative, and innovative design methodologies.

in

That designers redefine paradigms. That there are no changes without actions and that there are no actions without collaborative work.



Leslie Sern

Leslie is an industrial designer by trade, a maker at heart. She advocates for inclusive design, driven by the belief that everyone deserves access to the full human experience. She currently works in medical manufacturing and spends her free time experimenting in the kitchen, exploring locally, or learning new skills.

in

Nothing is perfect because everything is a prototype. I see this Oath as a foundation for future designers to improve and build upon as the world changes.

2023-2025 Cohort of the YDC that Started This Project

Content Subheader



Luis Dominguez

An artisanal product designer and researcher whose work bridges neuroscience, aesthetics, and cultural identity. Rooted in Latin American worldviews, he explores how design shapes human and life experience, honors heritage, and restores dignity to neglected systems—human, ecological, and spiritual. Outside work, he finds joy in the simple: nature, movies and crafts.

in

Ethical design shouldn’t feel exceptional—it should be intuitive, shared, and human. We’re not prescribing answers, but exploring a living practice rooted in dignity, meaning, and belonging.



Nesibe Kaya

Nesibe is a user experience designer with a background in industrial design, holding a master’s degree in the same field. My academic journey delved into the user acceptance of emerging technologies. My professional career began concurrently in Turkey, where I worked on the interface design of smart home appliances, allowing for mobile control.

in

A designer doesn’t just create products or experiences for today; they imagine and shape the world and life we will live in tomorrow.



Verónica A. Carrillo

Verónica is a Mexican architect and social scientist. With prior experience as an architectural designer and urban consultant, she has worked across different realms of the built environment allowing her to explore its complex relationships. Currently, Veronica works as a research associate in the UK, contributing to interdisciplinary research on housing.

in

Design shapes lives—when we ignore this, we fail people. Questioning our role isn’t optional; it’s the beginning of true design practice and the reason why questioning and defining core principles is needed.

And others that helped with parts of this project:

João H. Dluhosch
Carlos Jarquin
Manuel Ovalle

Contact Us

**Where one cohort dissipates,
another one is born.**

We believe that the work on the Oath may never truly end. As the world evolves, the oath will have to evolve with it. As we, and future generations of the YDC work on this project, we would love to hear from you.

For any questions/comments, please reach us on our email:

ycd@wdo.org

Direct Feedback for the Oath or this project can also be provided directly through filling up this form:

[Design Oath - Feedback Form](#)

Thank you.
The ball is just starting to roll.
We've got a long way to go.

As you continue to ponder and be a part of design-led impact, let's move together to create a more exciting world. If you find this project valuable, we'd love to hear from you.

If you share this document, mention the Young Designers Circle, and tag the WDO:

@worlddesignorg on Instagram
@World Design Organization on LinkedIn

Use the Hashtags:

#DesignOath

#OathForDesign

#WDO

#design4abetterworld

#Isupporttheoath

