

Forseeing Regenerative Futures: VR as A Future Foresight Tool for Industrial Design

Jomy Joseph

Institute of Design, The Oslo School of Architecture and Design , PO Box 6768 St. Olavs
plass, 0130 Oslo, Norway.

ABSTRACT

The age of the anthropocene and climate change brings with it an uncertain future while we continually plunder our life sustaining biosphere in the pursuit of mass consumption, enabled by design. With the need for immediate climate action there seems to be a crisis of imagination in seeing beyond business as usual, particularly when it comes to industrial design practise. This paper argues for the industrial design method and toolsets to undergo a kind of revolutionary shift in perception that allow for envisioning radically different, regenerative futures. Foreseeing radically different futures depends on being able to visualise a future that doesn't yet exist. Designing for such a future context depends on the credible foresight gained by designers through their craft to create a vision both desirable and feasible. This paper presents the case for using VR as a versatile tool for futures thinking in the context of long term sustainability and climate action through industrial design. The paper investigates and explores the texture of these designed futures by using the HTC Vive VR headset as a prototyping tool for future foresight in combination with other tools such as design fiction, 3D scanning, CAD modelling, film sketching and animation. Considering the inertia of the climate system and the disproportionate distribution of the cause and effect relationships of global climate realities, we notice that introducing VR helps bridge the uncertainties of space and time whereby an imagined tangible reality can be transposed into a digital virtuality as needed. It also shows promise as an open collaboration tool for industrial designers, who are otherwise interspersed globally, to engage with these future visions and build upon the trajectory for long term sustainability and industrial design practise.

Keywords: Future Foresight, Virtual Reality, Climate Change, Sustainability, Prototyping, Industrial Design.