

## Driving Renewal – Host Satu Rekonen

### Season 2, Episode 4: By starting small - guest Tua Björklund, Aalto Design Factory

**Satu:** In this episode, my guest is Tua Björklund, the director of Aalto University's Design Factory and a professor of product development. The Design Factory is known as a multidisciplinary experimentation and learning environment that has grown into an international network spanning 39 countries. Tua's research focuses on innovation capabilities and the advancement of ideas within organizations.

She has collaborated with hundreds of companies, and research based on this has been published in leading scientific journals on design, education, and management. Tua teaches product development, design thinking, and innovation practices, combining scientific research, practical tools, and examples.

She holds a degree in cognitive science from the University of Helsinki and a doctorate in Industrial engineering and management from Aalto University. In this episode, we discuss themes such as: Why are so many organizations still in the early stages of utilizing design? What kinds of tensions does design thinking often encounter in the everyday life of organizations? Whose involvement is crucial for advancing design thinking, and how small can the starting steps be?

**Satu:** Welcome to Driving Renewal podcast, Tua.

**Tua:** Thank you.

**Satu:** Today we will discuss renewal, particularly through the perspectives of design thinking and practices, and how design can be more broadly utilized in organizations.

I would be interested to hear first how you personally understand design and what it means to you?

**Tua:** Specifically in the context of design thinking, I believe that design is a human-centered approach to development. Personally, I prefer to use the English term "design" because "muotoilu" in Finnish often refers specifically to industrial design, whereas "design" encompasses various fields like engineering design, industrial design, and computer design. However, in my own thinking, I emphasize that in the context of design thinking, it is not limited to what

professional designers do, but also includes the tools we can use in various tasks to achieve development that takes into account people's realities.

**Satu:** You lead a multidisciplinary research group at Aalto Design Factory, and in 2021 you published the DesignPlus Sustainability report, for which you interviewed 101 designers from various organizations. This report discusses, among other things, the different roles and impacts of design that these designers felt their organizations and industries had. Could you tell us a bit about the kinds of roles design had in these companies?

**Tua:** Most typically, design and designers act as the voice of the users within a company. This often aligns with the goal of creating more customer-centric organizations, aiming for user-centered design. Designers can bring in additional methods to enhance customer insight and understanding.

Everyone in the organization does their own work, of course, but in a way that makes it well-digested and extends those practices. So that in all the different ways, we can understand the people we aim to serve with these products and business.

**Satu:** What other, perhaps the rarest role did you notice?

**Tua:** The rarest role was perhaps being involved in creating the strategy and differentiating through design as a strategic approach. This was typically linked to companies where design had a long-established role or where the company was quite small. For example, we're talking about design agencies or startups with a design founder.

In large companies, if it wasn't about being the voice of the customer, design was typically associated with making organizations more agile and turning development into a more continuous process. Or it served as a glue between different parts of the organization, meaning that when you're no longer in the startup phase but in a larger organization, how do you bring a shared understanding across different silos.

**Tua:** Drawing from that vision, we can then act swiftly and with a customer-centric approach.

**Satu:** I've been thinking that, despite there being a lot of research and practical knowledge about the benefits of design, such as how it supports organizational innovation, and even your report showed that the use of design is often still in its early stages within organizations. Why do you think that is?

**Tua:** Well, usually whenever new value can be brought in, it involves doing something differently. And that's where the paradox comes in: the value of design comes from introducing new activities, tools, and ways of thinking that the company doesn't yet have. But at the same time, because it's new, it doesn't quite fit in yet.

So even if there are good intentions and desires, you still encounter various tensions between different ways of thinking and approaches. This can lead to misunderstandings, and as a result, the first designer might not even be hired because the value of what is being missed isn't fully understood. Alternatively, there might be a small design team, but they don't quite have the right positions created for them yet to fully utilize this newer way of thinking and working, which doesn't quite fit in just yet.

**Satu:** What kind of common tensions can be identified between design thinking and practices, and for example, an engineering- or business-driven organization?

**Tua:** One of the most common things, especially in a technology environment, is that typically our interviewed engineers say they are very solution-oriented, and this is great. You need to find solutions that work.

And then the added value of design is seen in the fact that we start asking more questions. So... Instead of jumping straight into solving things, we dig deeper to see if this is the right perspective. On the other hand, this is done with slightly different tools, like whether we are immediately looking at scalable, verifiable solutions, or if we are first wondering, "What if we looked at this from this perspective?" Typically, the initial methods of design involve qualitative new insights and data, which may not directly fit into the data-driven approach that is otherwise business-oriented.

Maybe it's the idea of how we control risk. Is the risk that we know everything in advance and then act according to those specs, or do we control risk by making small enough steps that we don't have too much at stake?

So yeah, we haven't proven this yet, but it's interesting enough that we should look a bit further into it.

**Satu:** Design thinking often brings with it new ways of operating within an organization, and it doesn't just affect the actions but often the actions also feed into the culture, which needs to adapt accordingly.

How do you see the connection between organizational culture and everyday practices in the process of renewal?

**Tua:** Elsbach and Stigliani published a fantastic summary article where they reviewed everything that had been published about design and design thinking up to that point. They nicely illustrated that it's a bit of a chicken and egg problem when it comes to this new way of working.

It's easier to implement if it already fits nicely into the organization. For example, if the organization is already customer-centric, it's easy to introduce new tools to understand customers better because this is already familiar within the organization. At the same time, if the organization is not yet customer-centric, starting to introduce these tools to gain customer insights, bringing people to actually meet customers through interviews or various shadowing activities to see what customers really do with our products, can be very beneficial.

It makes it significantly easier to start becoming customer-centric. In our own research, we've borrowed from this and noticed that typically the most fruitful starting points are either taking something that is clearly a strength of the organization—like if you're already agile, you add more to that and then expand from there.

Or we focus on an area where everyone understands that, for example, customer-centricity is not yet up to par in our organization. We agree that this is either valuable or needs improvement, rather than going into a gray area where some believe that a more radical change is needed, while others think that things are already innovative enough and there's no need to rock the boat.

**Satu:** A shared understanding of where we are and what might be needed or beneficial. So, if an organization is interested in advancing these design practices further within the organization, how would you identify the key stakeholders that should be involved?

**Tua:** Yeah, well first of all, the designers themselves. It's very difficult to do this if you don't have some designers. And at some point, you'll definitely need experts within the company. Initially, you might also have them as consultants or external partners, but you need people who are already familiar with this, who have the deeper expertise to support it.

If you're not yet familiar with design thinking, you might not be able to effectively utilize design. That's perhaps the first step, to get the designers on

board. On the other hand, in practice, I don't think design can be done solely by designers themselves.

It requires a lot of input from various parts of the organization and collaboration. Design work is very much characterized by working together, which means you need to find partners who can be excited to join in. There are different strategies for identifying who might be the first to jump on board.

**Satu:** You've done research related to this as well, on how designers try to advance their practices within organizations and get the necessary attention to elevate it to a more strategic level. What kinds of strategies have you found?

**Tua:** In summary, this is a 360-degree exercise, meaning you definitely need leaders on your side. It could be that a new leader has joined the company who is enthusiastic about this and is the one who hires the first designer for the firm, setting the tone from the start. But in some cases, it might be more of a grassroots design initiative, where you start by "selling" design upwards and aim to demonstrate why it's worth investing more in this and gaining the mandate for broader change.

On the other hand, often the easiest initial supporters are those who are dissatisfied with the current situation. These are the people who notice various challenges or untapped opportunities within the organization and are looking for support and a broader group to address these issues. We see a lot of synergies here, where, for example, the same people pushing for new sales processes and customer-centricity team up with designers, or those advocating for agile or digitalization in the company include design in their efforts. This way, both parties benefit from having a shared agenda, rather than just one side calling out, "Hey, have you considered incorporating design?"

**Satu:** It sounds like there are a lot of potential stakeholders who could be involved when advancing design within an organization. So how can one start to identify who they really are, who should be included first, and in what way?

**Tua:** I would start by considering how satisfied people are with the current situation. Are there any challenges or opportunities that we see but haven't yet addressed? And on the other hand, how aligned are we with these people's interests and other agendas?

One way to start conceptualizing this is to categorize the different potential stakeholders into four different groups. These groups can change, of course, but it helps to think about what we have here. The first group would be those people

who clearly see that there is room for improvement and that the current situation isn't really working. These are perhaps the easiest to engage as active co-developers because you don't need to convince them that something needs to be done. Since the current situation doesn't work for them, they don't have much to lose.

It means that if the very first trials don't succeed, the interest won't immediately fade because the current situation still doesn't work. So, you need to find a way to move forward from here. The key partners you can involve in the entire process, whereas other groups might not be included in the whole development or change process, but rather brought in at appropriate stages.

For example, one of these groups can be thought of as a source of information, understanding what is wrong with the current system. They are not at all excited about what you are proposing and don't believe it's the right direction to go. But since the current situation doesn't work for them either, by talking to them more, perhaps through interviews or gathering information in different ways, you can get a very good understanding of what kind of issues should be addressed. Additionally, by better understanding these somewhat skeptical parties, you can also get an idea of what you actually need to show to get them on your side.

Instead, if you invite a design skeptic to the very first brainstorming session, the whole atmosphere can easily deflate. For example, in one company we studied, the technology director attended and immediately dismissed everything as nonsense. After that, it was very difficult to create a positive environment for development and open ideation. So, when inviting people to discuss solutions, it's important to include those who are already excited about the direction you're heading. Regardless of how satisfied they are with the current situation, the key is to see that there is some interest in moving towards the direction you're advocating.

And then, perhaps the most challenging group is those who don't see any problem with the current situation and also don't find the new direction promising. These are the so-called hardcore skeptics. In any change, you can't get everyone on board. If there are critical support functions or decision-makers needed for this change, you can't just leave them out. You need to either make people aware of the challenges in the current situation by highlighting the problems or missed opportunities. For example, if the goal is to create more customer-centric products, you could make the current dissatisfaction more visible by inviting leaders to see customers struggling with the product. This makes the issues more tangible than just presenting numerical data. Alternatively, you can genuinely involve them in the experiments. No one is a

prophet in their own land, so we've often found that it's easier to inspire people by having them see the experiments where partners or customers provide the evidence and share their enthusiasm. These small experiments can help involve different people at various stages, recognizing who the partners are and strategically involving them at different phases, either as sources of information or as converts.

**Satu:** Let me recap. So, in addition to understanding who is important to involve, it's also crucial to grasp at what stage to engage these different stakeholders. It's worth involving them. And at the same time, remember the hardcore skeptics, so their voices are also heard.

You've mentioned experimenting and taking small steps a few times now. So, how do you see the role of experiments when we talk more generally about organizational renewal?

**Tua:** Most studies have shown that when it comes to organizational culture change or larger organizational changes, these take years—whether it's two or seven years, but in any case, a big ship turns slowly. These small experiments allow us not to wait five years for something to happen, but to get things moving faster, which means we can learn as we go instead of planning everything first and then trying to implement a massive change all at once, which often doesn't succeed.

But then these small experiments also allow us to see some progress. It's really tough to push forward for years if it feels like nothing is changing, which can cause the change-makers themselves to get exhausted, stop driving the change, or leave the company. So, in addition to actually providing information on how to successfully implement changes, these small experiments bring a sense of progress, which is to development what oxygen is to humans. Without it, we would collapse before achieving the larger changes.

**Satu:** How can an organization support this kind of experimenting and small steps forward? Do you see any factors that could either support or hinder this process?

**Tua:** Yes, on many different levels. Often these are really small things, starting from how the first colleague you share an idea with reacts to it.

These seemingly small things mean that any of us can either facilitate a culture of experimentation or make it more difficult. If the first person says, "I don't



know, we tried this 30 years ago and it didn't work," it dramatically lowers the likelihood that we'll actually make any progress.

Another thing we know about change and the success of organizational culture shifts is that if you don't implement a new method the very next time you have the opportunity, it is more likely to get buried, waiting for a better time that never comes.

Many experiments are such that it's really difficult to do them alone. So, if you can at least get a partner involved, for example, if you attend a new training session, and you've been there with your team member, you can come back together and say, "Hey, we heard about this method, let's try it out." Having someone to go through it with you makes it a lot easier.

Then, from a leader's perspective, do people feel that they have the permission to experiment, or is there a need for a massive bureaucratic list of approvals for every little thing? The easier it is to access different resources—whether it's space to invite customers, various materials for quick experiments, or even support from the design team—the lower the threshold for these activities, the more likely we are to actually engage in experiments. And it's crucial to learn from these experiments or package the lessons in a way that they don't just remain as isolated trials. This is where support or hindrance can come into play: after an experiment is done, what happens next? Where are the results shared, and how is the information used? Is it just quietly forgotten, making it harder to inspire the next round of experiments, or is it communicated to everyone, outlining the results and the next steps? Are there easy pathways to move forward, or does it become a constant uphill battle to push these initiatives?

**Satu:** In previous episodes, it has been mentioned that showing unfinished work is also linked to this experimentation, which can be challenging in many expert organizations where it's often thought that as an expert, you should have the answers. This is perhaps also a mindset issue.

**Tua:** Yeah, and it represents quite a big shift in design thinking if you consider a typical consultant, who usually presents solutions. Instead, starting by asking questions and framing it in a way that you are an expert in asking these questions, rather than just presenting a ready-made package, can lead to better outcomes. But it also requires some identity work to still see yourself as credible and to communicate credibly to others that even though this is a different way of operating, we are still solidly within the expert domain.



**Satu:** So, the important role of experiments is to learn, not just to do something quickly and on a small scale. Once you've gained that knowledge, what should you do with it?

**Tua:** So, the lessons provide both information and ways to do this more efficiently, but critically, they also serve as small highlights, offering small wins amidst the renewal process.

So instead of having to wait for results on a larger scale, we get some preliminary evidence, like in this context where we did a quick experiment with a small group and the customers loved it, or we held a workshop within the company and got confirmation that we are heading in the right direction.

**Tua:** Those small experiments provide an opportunity to show that we are heading in the right direction, giving a sense of progress. With the help of these small wins, it might be easier to get people involved in the next experiments, because everyone wants to be part of successful activities. Additionally, since these are small successes and small experiments, we are not asking for a huge commitment at this stage. People can just join one workshop or one pilot project.

This way, we practically get the learning kind of... both paced in such a way that we get it in small enough pieces, but at the same time, we continuously make progress, which can then be built into a success story. And when we've looked at how design gains a foothold in organizations, it's precisely these small successes that attract others to join at the early-stage. We start investing blindly on a larger scale, but as soon as we have even minimal evidence of success, we can move on to a slightly bigger experiment. And when that yields a slightly bigger small success or small win, we can then further grow the belief in this approach and also see how it practically works. So, it's not just about belief, but also about understanding how to act accordingly.

**Satu:** What if we consider different groups or stakeholders, could these small wins have different roles depending on the group?

**Tua:** Yeah, if you think about the four-quadrant model of different stakeholders, for co-developers, the main role of small wins is to show that the ship is turning, that there is progress, and to maintain motivation that way. Whereas for information sources, small wins might start to act as a kind of antidote.

For those certain doubts, like "nothing will come from this direction," we can show that it's not just my word that this is the way to go, but we can actually demonstrate that it really works. So, we can start slowly convincing those who don't quite believe in this direction that there might actually be something to it.

One small win might not convert them yet, but it helps to soften the ground or get a foot in the door. The goal is to achieve a series of these small successes. At the same time, to get these small successes or small wins, the experiments typically have been small, so it's easier to ask those who are perhaps interested but don't yet see the challenge. If the current system works well enough, when the investment we ask for is small enough—whether it's a small investment of time, resources, or your image—it's easier to get involved even if there's no big challenge. For example, if we were developing some internal tools, while many tools might annoy employees, rarely does anyone want to spend three weeks of their life thinking about how to improve timekeeping.

It's super important for the people who are developing it, but for the majority of people who have to use it, it doesn't really matter that much. So if you ask for too big of a commitment, they won't get involved. But if you go for a bite-sized small experiment, it's easier to get people excited and involved. And critically, for those who are the most difficult, who don't see any challenges or potential in this direction, this can help get others on board as well.

Positive feedback coming directly from the change-maker themselves, especially when others have participated and been part of this small success, is usually something everyone wants to broadcast and share. When more people are involved, they become messengers, spreading the word through multiple channels within the organization, rather than just the main change-makers talking about how great it is.

**Satu:** Could you give a few examples of different experiments, as they can be quite varied in practice? What kinds have you observed in your organization or in those you've collaborated with?

**Tua:** Well, an experiment could be, for example, if we think about a strategy process, instead of the traditional approach where the management team retreats somewhere and then comes back with a new strategy.

So, we start a round where we go to different units and gather insights from the grassroots level about what they see in their work. And this can be done in just three different offices. It doesn't have to involve hundreds or thousands of employees and participants, just a small experiment. We move forward with

them, gathering such information, which gives us the opportunity to get really interesting observations that can actually help the strategy work by bringing in perspectives that weren't included before.

But at the same time, we also create the feeling that these parties have been heard, and the offices that participated get involved earlier. And then we can build on that. Or if things go completely wrong, it was just those three offices where we experimented, and we can take the critical lessons learned and move on to another pilot or experiment.

On the other hand, an experiment could be something like venturing into a new product. But instead of launching a full-scale product development project and getting all the big gears turning, we start simply by creating quick mock-ups and prototypes with just one customer. We see what comes out of it, experimenting on a small scale, and then refine based on that. This way, we can figure out how to co-develop these products or even specific product ideas with our customers before we've invested so much that it has to succeed.

So, in my opinion, an experiment is characterized by being small enough that it's perfectly fine if it doesn't work. The outcome isn't something we necessarily want to replicate. The success of an experiment, to me, is about whether we learned something from it or not. The experiment needs to be such that it's okay if we need a bit more iteration afterward.

**Satu:** This year, you published an article in the California Management Review together with Pia Hannukainen, Tuomas Manninen, and Sampsa Hyysalo. In this study, you examined OP Group's journey in increasing design maturity. Both Pia and Tuomas have also been guests on Driving Renewal podcast and have played a key role in advancing design maturity at OP.

This article is fundamentally about how design is organized, aligned, and displayed within an organization. If you had to summarize your findings, how would you do it, and what factors were crucial in elevating design to such an important position within the OP Group?

**Tua:** The most crucial observation here was that no such renewal or change journey happens alone. There is previous research that has looked into how design leaders should act, and many methods were found. In this case, it was also seen how important it is, for example, how design is organized, in which units they are placed, whether they are in places with perhaps a bit more breathing room initially to get some evidence, and then later to be implemented throughout the organization. But at the same time, it is evident how extremely

important it is what happens elsewhere in the organizations, that even the best design leaders cannot alone achieve a more mature or extensive use of design within the organization.

So this kind of alignment is about how well there is synergy between design and other parts of the organization. Earlier, we talked about the importance of finding those collaborative elements that can help drive bigger initiatives forward together. This included, for example, how product development is generally done.

How to involve customers in general? How to measure things like customer-centricity or agile development? Instead of just coming from a design perspective and starting to shape this, there are multiple different paths to move towards common goals. And when we manage to align these, it might also create demand. For example, if agility has become a key metric for the entire organization, then there is a different kind of need to find ways and interests to advance it. On the other hand, to reach this point, we still need to demonstrate it.

Here, without a doubt, there are both small wins, like OP's Design Days where the very first experiments are brought forward, or in the early stages when design was more centered in the Oulu unit, there's a place where people can come on a pilgrimage to see how things work here—not just design, but also agile development, which then helps to grow it.

Perhaps a willingness to innovate, so that we can secure those positions to allow for more organization and coordination. We noticed that at different stages, different actions were emphasized a bit more, depending on the phase, but the key point is that all three are needed all the time. You can't just show it initially and then forget about it, because as we scale up and increase design maturity, it...

New evidence is always needed to reach the next stages. Similarly, what works in an organization when there are only a few individual designers no longer works later on. For example, it was noted that creating the role of a business designer was a very important turning point. It's not just about which unit you're in or what the design model looks like, but rather about having roles like these that help you reach new stages.

So, there are many case studies about bringing design into an organization, where there's a great start or kickoff, and then things fizzle out. Someone leaves the organization, whether it's a critical leader who changes or a key designer

who moves to another company, and then all that progress kind of slips away. So, when these same things are brought from many directions and also by many voices—there's product development, there's design, there's the HR director, there's the technology director—then it's much better rooted in the organization. It doesn't just stay at a strategic level and then things happen and we see. For example, in one model, like the Danish Design Center's Design Ladder, which has four steps, where the top step is design at a strategic level, some studies have suggested that there should actually be a fifth step. This step is essentially the same as being at a strategic level, but now it has actually created that rooting, so it's more genuinely embedded in everyday life, making it harder to fall off when new winds blow.

**Satu:** So, as the title of your paper suggests, the integration and demonstration of these three organizational aspects must be interconnected. It's not enough to be strong in just one area if we want to drive comprehensive reform forward.

**Tua:** I think this is very typical for design in general, that it's not either-or, but both-and thinking.

We have a previous study with over a hundred design leaders. It was examined in a similar manner. We need both deep design expertise and broad understanding to embed it into organizations simultaneously. If you only have one, it either remains local or very superficial.

Here we delved deeper into how you can actually achieve both in-depth and broad utilization by looking at what different actors within the organization are truly capable of doing.

**Satu:** What are some common pitfalls you've learned about when trying to implement design thinking and practices more broadly within an organization?

**Tua:** Maybe one issue is that we hire designers for the company, but then we don't actually give them space. So, they are kind of cornered there, with high expectations for impressive results, but then they don't get access to customers or the critical partners they need, leaving promises unfulfilled.

Another issue is that we invest heavily in providing Design Thinking training for everyone, but then the support structures needed to actually implement it in the workplace are missing. Now we've all heard about design thinking and have gained some expertise from a single workshop. Isn't that enough to consider it done, right?

Now we all know design thinking, job done, which leaves it at least very superficial, but often not even that, because it doesn't really take root in the actual work. Perhaps a bit rarer but probably the third most common stumbling block is having good local experiments here and there, but they don't really work together. So, there's some benefit in different parts of the organization, but the bigger promise remains unfulfilled because we're pulling in different directions within the organization. We lack the means to share these experiences and work together more broadly.

**Satu:** Let's finally talk about the Aalto Design Factory, which was established back in 2008. At that time, it was known that Aalto University would be founded, and the Design Factory was one of Aalto University's flagship projects. Initially, the idea was that this would just be a project that would eventually come to an end.

But today, Design Factory continues its operations and has become an established independent unit. As mentioned earlier, it has already expanded to 39 different locations. I would be interested to know how this global network of Design Factories has been able to expand and establish its operations.

**Tua:** Design Factory has grown quite organically, both our Design Factory here at Aalto and the network. It started from the fact that although universities themselves produce a vast amount of new knowledge and science is constantly evolving, universities as organizations are generally quite traditional. There are a huge number of different faculties, departments, and very siloed structures. In Finland, this is further combined with the fact that academic freedom, in all its glory, means that it is not necessarily very easy to collaborate across different boundaries.

At Aalto, the whole idea behind the establishment was to enable interdisciplinary collaboration. Design Factory develops these co-creation models and perhaps also demonstrates on the practical side how this actually works. We have joint activities between companies, students, and various fields of science.

And on the other hand, we also have research involved, which in the academic world is quite critical for credibility. And this is not just a unique challenge for Finland, wanting to do more interdisciplinary work and bring impact into education during the study period, aiming to better connect students, companies, scientists, and teachers. Initially, we were just a place to visit, where people from around the world would come to see how different organizations are trying to develop this.

But then we realized that innovating can be quite a lonely job, and as the saying goes, no one is a prophet in their own land. We've noticed that in many organizations, it's easier when you can point out that something has worked elsewhere. And perhaps as a small initial victory, you can go and see that, aha, here the students are really enthusiastic about this collaboration.

Here are the companies that truly believe in this. Here, these scientists, in harmonious or at least dynamic discussions, collaborate together. Through this, other universities, higher education institutions, and research institutes have also wanted to join in, which from our perspective has been fantastic because it also shows internally at Aalto that, hey, this works not just here but interests others as well.

So we can get some leverage from the outside, evidence that this is a good idea, but it also means that we don't have to make every mistake ourselves; we can learn from the variations of others. Since design factories exist in very different cultures and contexts—some in engineering schools, some in design schools, some interdisciplinary, and some focused on innovation services—we can learn from each other's experiments and see what works across cultural boundaries and different situations. We can also identify specific nuances that are important to consider. Innovation can be very lonely, so these networks are crucial. Even if you sometimes feel a bit alone pushing things forward on the home front, you can get peer support and strength from the network, as well as sparring.

And this is actually the same with design in any organization. When we've studied companies where design is decentralized around the world, the ability to gather together instead of always being the only one is crucial. Similarly, at the Design Factory, we bring together locally those at Aalto who want to do things differently, want to work interdisciplinarily, and want to collaborate with companies and students, but also on a broader scale.

And fortunately, nowadays at the beginning, we're no longer the only ones here, and of course, we were never truly the only ones. But it helps that there are these clusters, so you don't always have to push forward alone, but can find collaborators a bit more easily.

**Satu:** We have now heard very interesting perspectives and experiences related to research and practical experience on how these design-like approaches can be advanced. It's interesting to ask you in conclusion how you use these ways of thinking and approaches in your own work.



**Tua:** I wear many different hats, and I think that's typical in any kind of innovation. So it's not so much about what you feel like doing in a given situation, but rather what is needed. And understanding who is involved in these various decisions and experiments and what they need. So, the same tools we use to think about, for example, how we can get co-developers for design in the organization, we use in our own work.

On the other hand, especially in a leadership role, I think it's absolutely critical to make or leverage progress to drive development forward. There are always numerous fronts, and some of them move frustratingly slowly. One designer described it as designers needing to be optimistic but also annoyed. You have to believe that something can be done about the issue, and at the same time, you have to be frustrated that things could be better.

In a way, there's always a hunger to do more, and that's fantastic because that's how the world changes. But it can also be quite exhausting if you're constantly seeing opportunities for improvement everywhere. I think it's important to learn to recognize the small wins that you notice yourself. This way, you can give yourself a sort of oxygen mask to keep going. It's also crucial to show your partners and your team that what they do really matters and to highlight those moments of progress.

Collective strength so that we are not alone, and the earlier we can get others excited and show that progress is being made, those are perhaps also the cornerstones of our own actions and unit. No one can keep giving 110 percent for very long if they are alone and without progress.

**Satu:** Exactly. Hey, thanks a lot for the visit, Tua! This has been a super interesting discussion, and I've gotten a lot of tips for my own daily life and work development. Thank you.

**Tua:** Thank you, Satu.