

## Towards a Well-Thought World: Design Anthropology in Context

### **Abstract**

Design anthropology has many faces. For some practitioners, it is about achieving better design, for others about higher profits, and for others it is about better socio-cultural understandings. This talk positions the speaker's understanding of design anthropology work and what it can achieve. The aspiration of a 'well-thought world' assumes that most people nowadays see the 'design' of products and services as where their value lies, in the conceptualisations and considerations behind them as much as their functional use. In this paradigm, design is not only about usability and technology, but also about the circulation of knowledge about people, and the ways that the material world considers us, and considers others. Design anthropologists work here as an essential part of the social infrastructure, helping to manifest and imaginatively evoke identities, relationships, responsibilities, and social awareness within goods and services. The talk looks at the real differences an anthropologist can make when involved in designing, through different kinds of 'thought work'. It concludes with some speculations about what a design anthropologist might be in future, in a world re-orienting itself more towards Asia, and where research work is inflected with Artificial Intelligence technologies.