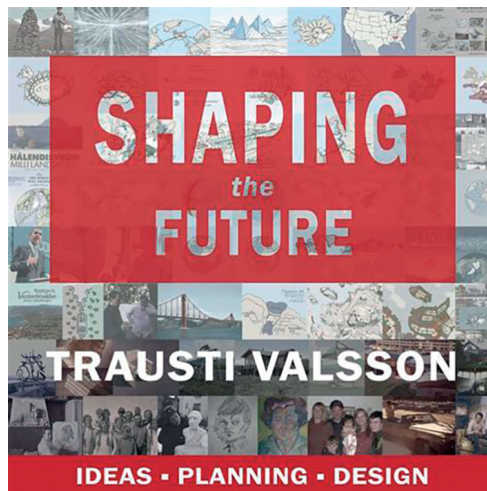


## Shaping the future. Ideas-Planning-Design.

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The book “Shaping the future” by Trausti Valsson (born 1946 in Reykjavik, Iceland) is an intertwined narrative of the author’s autobiography and a history of planning ideas during his career. It is a lifetime perspective of an Icelandic architect, planner, theorist and the first and only professor of planning at the University of Iceland. It provides the author’s perspective on what shaped major ideologies in planning and urban design in the Western world, as well as in Iceland in post war times – a period of challenges concerning the planning discipline and the shaping of cities. The book gives insight into the planning history of Reykjavik city the capital of Iceland in this period, with which the author is particularly familiar. Further, it explains the author’s contribution and efforts to the planning of one city over a period of 50 years, his contribution to the development of the field of planning in Iceland and his wide involvement in public discussions about planning in the country. During the period in question, a large part of the current urban form of the Reykjavik capital was developed. In the book, Trausti Valsson tells about his experiences and the struggles he had to deal with as a planner in a young society, as well as in academia. He writes about his planning ideas and puts the narrative into an internationally historical context.

The text is supported with illustrations and figures throughout. The figures are simultaneously reflecting the society, the personal and professional life of the author, and the development of urban areas, architecture, and art in Iceland and internationally. The book also includes artwork and sketches,



which are important to the author’s interests and practice from a young age. During his career, Valsson moved from the small-scale and temporary to the large-scale and long-term. As young man, he was interested in drawing portraits and in furniture design, then in architecture and building design until he began working with physical structures and planning proposals. He focused first on the Reykjavik capital area and moved later to a national scale. In the last period of his career he focuses on long-term environmental concerns of the Earth and attempts to see things in a larger context.

The book is divided in five periods and seven main sections, based on the author’s life phases. These include the author’s childhood and youth in Reykjavik, his architectural education in Berlin during the revolutionary years of the ’68 generation, his employment at the (planning) development office in Reykjavik, his PhD study in Berkeley, and the years after his return to Iceland.

During his study years in Berlin, Valsson became interested in morphology and in ty-

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pologies of forms and systems for environmental design. His work at the Reykjavik development office (now Department of Environment and Planning), after his graduation in Berlin in 1972 was influenced by an environmental awakening in Iceland and internationally. In this period, Valsson worked on many big and important proposals and became more and more interested in environmental theories and the larger context of importance for planning. This led him to start working on a plan for Iceland, acknowledging the meaning of natural resources for settlements in Iceland.

In 1979, he went to Berkeley in US and in 1980 he started his PhD study in environmental planning. Here Valsson became acquainted with, among others, Ian McHarg, Buckminster Fuller and Christopher Alexander, who influenced his PhD work. In his dissertation, he developed a soft, holistic design theory by studying form characteristics of the worldviews of West and East and how these could be applied in design.

In 1988, a year after Valsson returned to Iceland from the US, he achieved an associate

professor position in planning at the Engineering Faculty of the University of Iceland, and later a full professor position. The last part of this book describes his 27 years at the University. When he retired in 2016, he was still the only person who had been a professor of planning at an Icelandic University.

Valssons' life's work has been characterized by interest and urge to shape the society in a positive way. At the same time, he has been energetic about introducing planning subjects into societal discussions. The book is, in my mind, an important reference on events and attitudes from the recent past, and therefore essential reading for students and anyone interested in the history of ideas, planning, and the shaping of the built environment.

### **Shaping the future. Ideas-Planning-Design.**

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