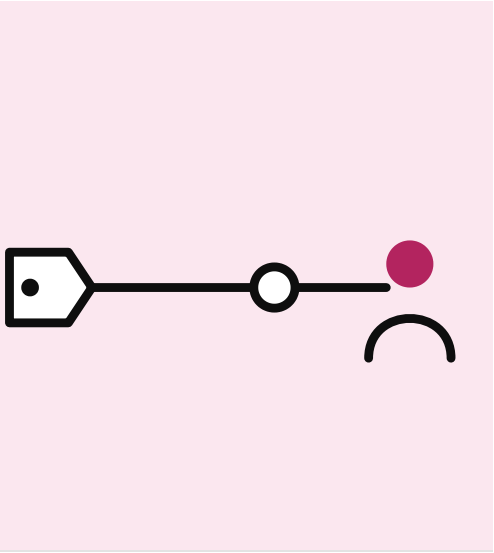
Concept

Social model of design

Victor and Sylvia Margolin's proposal for design whose brief puts human needs ahead of sales and that works alongside social care professionals.



In Spanish
Modelo social del diseño

Origin
Margolin and Margolin (2002)

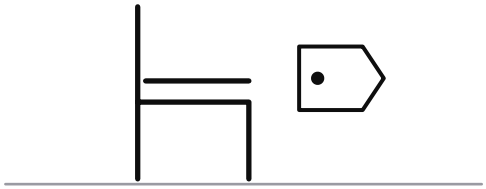
What problem it addresses

The market doesn't cover every need. The model gives design a way to work for people who can't pay, drawing on the method of social work.

An example

An illustrative example: two briefs to design a chair.

Market model



A chair to sell in stores. **Success is measured in sales.**

Social model



A chair for an older person who lives alone, designed with their social worker. **Success is measured by whether their daily life improves.**

The Margolins don't see them as opposites but as the two ends of one line: what changes is the brief's priority.

Why it happens

1 

The market doesn't cover every need, especially those of people with low incomes, older people or people with disabilities.

2

Social work already knows how to intervene: it follows a step-by-step process to help a person or a group.

3 

Design joins that team and contributes objects and spaces within the intervention.

Applications in design

Use it like this

If the brief is social, measure success by the need met, not by sales.

Avoid

Working alone, without the people and professionals who already know the problem.

Don't fall for it

Social and market aren't opposites: many products that are sold also meet needs.

6 steps

What the research says

They borrowed a six-step process from social work: engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation and termination (Margolin and Margolin, 2002).

● ○ ○ **Single study.** It is a proposal, not a measured result: the authors themselves call for research into what a designer adds to these interventions.

Connections

Used in

- Human-centered design
- Design for policy

Related to

- Diffuse design and expert design
- Design for the real world

Authors and works

2002	**Victor Margolin and Sylvia Margolin**	Proposed the social model and placed it at the opposite end of one line from the market model.
1971	**Victor Papanek**	His lists of needs that design neglected are one of the foundations of the model.

Sources

Original sources

- Margolin, V., & Margolin, S. (2002). A “social model” of design: Issues of practice and research. Design Issues, 18(4), 24–30. View source (https://doi.org/10.1162/074793602320827406)
- Papanek, V. (1971). Design for the real world: Human ecology and social change. Pantheon Books.

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