

DESIGNING LEARNING SCENARIOS FOR FUTURES OF SUSTAINABILITY

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WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Understanding sustainability in terms of our complex, dynamic and inter-connected socio-ecological systems requires a different mindset or paradigm to the industrial mode of thinking that has influenced educational practice for the last century (Orr, 2004, Wood, 2007). Rather than fragmenting the world into separate disciplines for the sake of efficiency, an alternative whole systems approach to sustainability education aims to join-up different skill-sets and types of knowledge to improve effectiveness (Sterling, 2001). This requires a shift from the delivery of knowledge via top-down pedagogic methods, to designing the conditions for a critical co-learning to take place. Here, co-learners work together in groups towards the generation of a shared knowledge or 'knowledge ecology' (Fairclough, 2005).



Figure 1: Designing Learning Scenarios workshop, MA Design Futures + Metadesign, Goldsmiths, London, October 2014

Currently, in the UK and beyond, education for the arts and design is under stress, largely due to economic instability. How can we approach this as an opportunity to re-design design education to design itself, so that it can become really responsive and effective on behalf of the environment? Some hints at this lie in examples of more participatory, contextually imbedded design projects, such as, Marjetica Potrc's 'Design for the Living World' (<http://designfortheivingworld.com/>).

Our ambitious 3-hour workshop positions this creative challenge in the arena of Design Ecologies. We will focus on developing scenarios as a way to prospect how design education might respond to a range of possible ecological futures at a systemic level. To achieve this we will use metadesign thinking and methods to support and innovate new modes of collaborative learning.

Metadesign is defined by digital media and interaction design researcher, Professor Elisa Giaccardi, as a 'shared design endeavour aimed at sustaining emergence, evolution and adaptation', where the ecological metaphor of 'design seeding' replaces a traditional notion of 'design planning' (Giaccardi, 2005). Earlier definitions of metadesign can be traced through the field of HCI to Gerhard Fischer's notion of 'inviting the creativity of others' into the design process (Fischer, 2000). Even further back, the pioneer of design methods, John Chris Jones, defined metadesign as 'the design of design processes and processes of change' (Jones, 1970, 1991). All of these definitions have in common qualities of openness, collaboration, inclusivity and transformation.

This workshop continues to adapt collaborative tools and methods, which have been developed as part of ongoing research into metadesign at Goldsmiths, University of London. The focus of our research at Goldsmiths has been to optimise synergy within interdisciplinary design teams. This research began with the AHRC funded project 'Benchmarking Synergy-levels within Metadesign' (2005-2008), which aimed to explore and develop more joined-up approaches to design for sustainability. Our research has generated a set of metadesign principles for guiding more ethically and environmentally attuned design practice, and a collection of over 80 tools for working in creative teams, towards this goal (www.metadesigners.org).

WORKSHOP PROCESS

Participants will begin by sharing stories from the news that resonate with them as designers and citizens, which focus on sustainability (our definition of sustainability is broad, and examples might range from climate change, to dumping waste, to over fishing etc...). In teams, we will then distil and map issues, values and stakeholders

from selected stories and critically discuss opportunities for design. Next, the teams will use this information to co-create rapid prototypes for imaginative, responsive learning experiences for designers. The teams will be asked to act out their prototype scenarios to the rest of the group for feedback. Finally, the whole group will engage in a scaling activity, mapping their learning scenarios across different orders of design, from product, to services, infrastructures and systems, to paradigms and ethos, to gain a systemic overview.

THE OVERARCHING WORKSHOP AIMS AND GOALS ARE:

- To explore ecological futures at a systemic level
- To engage with metadesign thinking and methods
- To innovate new modes of collaborative learning
- To map, prototype, enact and scale learning scenarios in teams
- To take away ‘seeds’ or starting points for developing future learning experiences

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME:

The workshop is comprised of the following stages:

1. Introduction to the workshop
2. ‘I read the news today, oh boy...’ – sharing news articles
3. Metadesign and Futures of Sustainability - a brief overview
4. Distilling and mapping issues, values and stakeholders
5. Prototyping and enacting learning scenarios
6. Scale your scenarios

ATTENDEES’ REQUIREMENTS:

- The workshop can accommodate 15 participants
- It is open to designers and non-designers of various backgrounds
- Participants can sign-up to register for the workshop
- Participants must commit to staying the full length of the workshop as the activities rely on collaboration throughout the workshop stages
- Participants need to bring along a news article on the topic of ‘Futures of Sustainability’ (More detailed information will be given closer to the date)

DURATION:

- The workshop will take 3 hours

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PHYSICAL SETTING AND MATERIALS:

- A space that has 3 – 4 tables and chairs for up to 17 people + some space to move about.
- A projector and computer
- A wall to pin/ stick paper on (min. 2m x 3m)
- Flipchart paper
- Post-it notes
- Pens, scissors
- Modelling materials (e.g. any recycled materials to prototype with)

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