Beyond Change, SDN Design Research Winter Summit (Basel, 8–10 Mar 18)

Basel, CH, Mar 8–10, 2018
Deadline: Aug 15, 2017

Prof. Dr. Claudia Mareis

Beyond Change
Questioning the role of design in times of global transformation

Second SDN Design Research Winter Summit 2018
at the FHNW Academy of Art and Design Basel

Present discourses in design research, art, cultural studies, media studies, philosophy, and social science are dominated by the much-debated concept of the 'Anthropocene,' which supposedly elicits a heightened sensitivity for the negative impact that anthropocentric policies and technologies continue to have on our planet, and thus on the terms and conditions of humanity's long-term survival. Against the backdrop of catastrophe and normalized crisis, designers as problem-solvers and agents of material-visual culture are called upon to draft speculative scenarios, construct artificial worlds, and develop smart solutions. However, the current tendency to see global crisis first and foremost as a worldwide design competition has deservedly received much criticism. Against this backdrop, we feel urged to ask: How can design make a significant contribution to a more just society and sustainable forms of living without impeding or compromising bottom-up initiatives? How can it foster political and social engagement beyond user-centered or speculative approaches? How can design practice and theory influence how problems are approached without marginalizing the voices of those who are most directly affected? How can designers intervene in environmental issues without turning them into design projects that value aesthetics over commitment? What strategies are being formulated by different approaches to design education? Finally, what specific function does the mode of (design) research have: how can scholarly reflexivity and alternative forms of knowledge be combined with concrete social commitment?

The characterization of design as a mode of social and environmental transformation has a long tradition. Decades ago, design scholars such as Herbert Simon, Otl Aicher, Victor Papanek, Tomás Maldonado, Horst Rittel, and Lucius Burckhardt drew attention to the fundamentally artificial character of what we call environment and emphasized the central role of design in creating futures and pasts. Papanek's Design for the Real World (1971) provided an important impetus for critically revisiting the Western-Modernist foundations of design and the resulting concepts, artefacts, and applications. Various contributions to the history and theory of participatory design or social design (Brock, 1977; Binder et al., 2011; Manzini, 2015; Margolin, 2015; Banz, 2016) have further directed attention to the power dynamics characteristic for design and the determining effects of design. It is now more crucial than ever to reflect critically on the image of design as an omnipo-

tent problem-solving activity for the 'real world,' and to discuss concrete design projects that respond to current social and political conditions.

Recent concepts for a problem- and context-conscious design practice, such as 'transformation design' (Jonas et al., 2015; Sommer/Welzer, 2016) or 'transition design' (Irwin et al., 2015), have involved rethinking established understandings of aesthetics and speculation. Further, the emergence of platforms such as 'Decolonizing Design' exemplifies attempts to overcome the marginalization of design approaches that originate and flourish in the Global South. The focus of such approaches is on topics such as sustainability, waste reduction and recycling, social justice, and postcolonial design models. From this perspective, it seems worthwhile investigating politically committed (social) design projects as to their underlying philosophies and cultural contexts in order to approach more humble and aware modes of intervention. How can we reimagine design as an unbounded, queer, and unfinished practice that approaches the world from within instead of claiming an elevated position? How, for once, can we try to see design as a situated practice instead of turning it into the Global North's escape and problem-solving strategy? How can we think about one world without falling into planetary-scale thinking and the idea that resilience is our only hope?

What is needed is a radically new understanding of design practice and education that unfolds its potential in interaction with different actors, cultures, disciplines, production and knowledge cultures. On the one hand, this requires repositioning design between creative practice in the narrower sense and an extended, form-independent and interdisciplinary concept of intervening; on the other hand, design should from the outset problematize approaches and perspectives that are mainly determined by the Global North.

The Second SDN Design Research Winter Summit 2018, hosted by the FHNW Academy of Art and Design Basel/Switzerland, is calling for contributions that address the outlined topics and covering the full field of both practice-led and theoretical-historical design research. Particularly desirable are small-scale projects targeting real-world impact, which are committed to the conference themes and whose authors are willing to reflect critically on these projects during the conference. Finally, relevant proposals that do not stem from design research in the narrower sense, but which relate to policy and sustainability research, development cooperation, urban planning, or social work, for example, are also welcome.

Applicants are invited to submit proposals for lectures, project presentations, and workshops. We explicitly encourage applications that propose an experimental approach to the conference's topic (visual presentations, documentary films, social media, etc.).

Applications must be written in English, should not exceed 3000 words (excluding references), and should be submitted as a single PDF. Large media files should be included as weblinks in the PDF. Additionally, authors must include a short biography of maximum 250 words. Collective submissions are also welcome. All contributions will be peer reviewed. All applications should be sent via the Easyschair Platform before August 15, 2017. For more information about the content of the conference please contact: nina.paim@beyondchange.ch

Submissions at: https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=bechange2018

……

Key dates:

25 May 2017: Call for papers
15 August 2017: Deadline for applications
1 October 2017: Notification of acceptance and reviewer feedback
8–10 March 2018: Conference
……

Conference Host:
FHNW Academy of Art and Design Basel
Coordination: Prof. Dr. Claudia Mareis, Sarah Haug, and Nina Paim

Conference Chairs – Swiss Design Network:
Dr. Massimo Botta, University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland, SUPSI
Dr. Davide Fornari, Ecole Cantonale d'art de Lausanne, ECAL
Prof. Dr. Claudia Mareis, FHNW Academy of Art and Design, Basel
Isabel Rosa Müggler Zumstein, Lucerne School of Art and Design, HSLU
Prof. Dr. Sarah Owens, Zurich University of the Arts, ZHDK
Prof. Dr. Arne Scheuermann, Bern University of the Arts, HKB
Prof. Dr. Anne-Catherine Sutermeister, University of Art and Design Geneva, HEAD

Reference:

CFP: Beyond Change, SDN Design Research Winter Summit (Basel, 8-10 Mar 18). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 1, 2017 (accessed Nov 19, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/15693>.