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Futures Design, Language and Systems – Towards languaging pluriversal futures

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Introduction

Words and language are inextricably linked with a designer's ability to shape futures, both productively and analytically. In this workshop, the participants will be introduced to a suite of tools curated for an exploration into the role of language within futures design projects. This workshop aims to build an understanding towards 'languaging' of futures and open a systems-level enquiry into challenges of imagining alternative and pluriversal futures within design.

Fuel4Design is a three year Erasmus + Project (www.fuel4design.org) and this workshop will build on the work done within its first work package called 'A Lexicon of Design Futures Literacies'.

Design, Language, Futures and Systems

Complex relations between systems, knowledge and action need to be shaped while examining and working towards transforming those very relations for the better. Previously solution-centric, formalist and modernist notions of planning and prediction and design progress are inadequate for responding to a world that needs what we term 'urgent design' (Morrison 2019b). There is a need for Design to rapidly and responsibly address ways to work with survivable, sustainable futures (Fry, 2009) and their ongoing participative enactment.

Working towards shaping shared futures is crucial when it's about systemic transition with focus on wellbeing. There is an inherent connection between multimodal design and multisensory futures, especially when focusing on plurality/multiplicity of futures. This is a matter of working towards futures, not simply planning nor prediction.

Words convey and communicate our designs for and about the futures; those designed futures also impact on how we use terms and concepts, definitions and expressions in our wider design discourse. As designers we use language to be able to describe, define, annotate, orient, critique and interpret our actions, processes, partnerings and products. As words are situated in communities of practice and use, it's important to bring focus on the language we use through our design vocabulary. How design goes about 'languaging the future' is then likely to become all the more important.

The Workshop Proposal

This workshop deals with the topic of Futures Design, with a focus on how we as designers 'language' this future. Early versions of this workshop have been conducted with doctoral researchers at Oslo School of Architecture and Design and PoliMi (as a part of their summer school). This three hour workshop has been modified for professionals. Its purpose is to position the topic of 'languaging the future' from a systemic point of view and open it up for discussion through self-reflexive activities consisting of reading, writing and web-based interactives. The workshop will accept a maximum of 20 participants and will take place in four phases.

The following section will outline how the workshop will be conducted:

PHASE 1 : INTRODUCTION			
TIME	ACTIVITY	SOURCE MATERIAL & ACTION	OBJECTIVE
5 mins	**ASSEMBLE** (all)	Click on the link Join the session via Zoom	Getting everyone together.
	CONSENT (all)	**CONSENT FORM** Please send the signed form to Palak (palak.dudani@aho.no) Permission Form	
15 mins	**INTRODUCTION** Talk (all)	**TOPICS** Language and Design Language and Futures Futures Design Fuel4Design Website	This section introduces the notion of shaping shared futures. It explains how words are situated in communities of practice and use, and brings focus on the language we use through our design vocabulary.
15 mins	**DISCUSSION** (all)	Participants discuss their understanding of design and future	Build familiarity between the group of participants and a broad understanding of 'Futures'.

PHASE 2: WORKING WITH FUTURES AND DESIGN			
10 mins	**FRAMING & CONNECTING** (individual)	Using the [FRAMES 4 FUTURES](), connect an issue from your work/project.	Frames 4 Futures presents a systems framework to the participants for positioning and sorting approaches and settings for understanding [FUTURES DESIGN]() and [DESIGN FUTURES LITERACIES]().
20 mins	**REFLECTION** Personal reflection (individual)	**WRITE** Speed write 200 word summary of a Futures Design project you've been working on Refer to [50 FUTURES DESIGN WORDS]() **POSITION** Note 5-10 key words	Get into understanding keywords and how participants connect them to a systems view.
PHASE 3: ENGAGING & REFLECTING ON FUTURES AND DESIGN			
15 mins	**ORIENTATION** Try out (individual)	**On the REFLEXICON** [Reflexicon: The Game]() **TUTORIAL** [Reflexicom Tutorial]() (10mins)	This warm up exercise gives a preview on how participants can apply the terms to their design project in order to understand how their work might relate to shaping future needs, conditions and challenges.
20 mins	**PLAYING & REFLECTING** Using the game (individual)	**REFLEXICOVID** [Reflexicovid: The Game]() Relate to your research Focus on terms **USING TERMS**	This is the main section of this phase. It's a reflexive exploration to think how Lexicon terms relate to the COVID-19 crisis. It aims to bring focus on how systems are articulated in Futures Design and raise questions regarding our approach to 'languaging' futures.

		Reconsider terms, definitions and concepts on futures in your recent, current or planned research publication work.	
25 mins	**DISCUSSION** (all)	Observations, learnings, insights	

PHASE FOUR: IN CLOSING

10 mins	**ANTICIPATING** (All)	**LEXICON CHIMERA** [Chimera - The interactive](#) A randomised word-generator to work as a prompt, but also an inspiration to experiment with word-making.	This activity aims to inspire designers to experiment and explore potentials of working with words in a playful manner. The participants are encouraged to think of words as flexible and ever evolving 'meaning-devices'.
30 mins	**DISCUSSION** (all)	**RESPONSES & COMMENTS** Joint discussion	Building on the systems point of view, the participants talk about transdisciplinary discourses between futures design and systems, articulating connections between systems, futures, design and language
5 mins	**ON FUTURES** (all)	**RESOURCES** [LEXICON - FUEL4Design Project](#)	The workshop is wrapped with links to additional resources.
5 mins	**FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS**	**FEEDBACK** Feedback on the Game design and engagement [Reflexicon Feedback Form](#)	

Conclusion

The workshop raises questions of language discourses, issues of mediations and representations, especially when working on futures with systemic implications. It leaves the participants with the knowledge of vocabulary, framing and languaging of the 'pluriversal futures'. As experienced with the interactive tool 'reflexicovid', the workshop not only deals with the issues of the present thrown into the speculations of 'futures', but also brings the questions of futures into the present.

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