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Design with Togetherness: Cooperation among relations, systems, processes

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DESIGN WITH TOGETHERNESS: cooperation among relations, systems, processes

Can a cooperative and tinkering approach be a strategic tool for systemic design to develop an eco-social perspective and to tackle complex issues in a more sustainable way?

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Abstract

The online workshop proposal develops from the issues addressed within my PhD research. Starting from a reflection on the contemporary global upheavals, such as the propagation of individualistic practices, the proliferation of ecological disasters, the lack of care for the Other and the Elsewhere, the idea is to question about the responsibility of the designer. It seems necessary to redirect the future perspective for the discipline that sees in the design language the inclusion of keywords such as *cooperation, care, mutualism, responsibility, togetherness*.

As a starting point, the organization of the online workshop provides a brief theoretical introduction in which a "minimum design glossary" is presented, useful to constitute a preliminary basis for the development of an eco-social perspective for the participants. It is an introductory step and a *tentacular* operation (Haraway, 2016) necessary to understand the complex challenges, or rather the missions, that await the designer and to develop a critical point of view essential for the design of an alternative to status quo.

In defining the theme of the online workshop - and of the PhD research on which it lays the foundations - it was fundamental to draw on other languages to understand the complexity of reality (Morin, 2020), to build an interdisciplinary glossary.

The theme is based on placing two key words such as Design and Cooperation in a critical dialogue, meaning *Design* as culture and practice, highlighting its social mandate and ecological perspective (Maldonado, 2022; Papanek, 2019) and *Cooperation* as a system of collective and immersive practices of "doing together". According to *mutual aid* paradigm proposed by Kropotkin, when hostile conditions occur, animal species do not develop competitive and individualistic attitudes, but it is cooperation, mutual aid in fact, that is the driving force that allows the evolutionary process to develop in the biosphere.

Starting from this theoretical premise, the purpose of the online workshop is to question the participants about the relationship between design research and practice and the cooperative and tinkering approach: can it be a strategic tool for systemic design? What methods and tools will be needed, and will these require a greater contribution from the other disciplines with which design has always (or not yet) interacted?

It will be created an interactive and rhizomatic space in which a hybrid learning-by-doing methodology will be adopted, very useful for investigating in depth new possibilities and practices of systemic design.

KEYWORDS: cooperation, tinkering approach, eco-social perspective, systemic design, interdisciplinary methodology, new scenarios

RSD TOPIC(S): Methods & Methodology, Socioecological Design

Description

INTRODUCTION

The workshop proposal is part of the RSD11 themes and focuses as it aims to create a space for investigation, collective and participatory, regarding what may be the future missions and responsibilities of systemic design that wants to deal with the complex

problems of the present (and the future). The intent is to make the workshop participants protagonists in answering the assignments proposed by the facilitator, but above all to interpret them, re-signify them and give interesting insights, trying to share new possible scenarios linked to systemic design practices. In support of this purpose, there is the fact that the workshop proposal - which will be held online, to also experience the contribution of using a digital space - moves from an ongoing PhD research thesis carried out by the facilitator and this interactive session will act as a real field analysis action, very interesting and useful for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data.

PHASE 1: WHAT DOES SYSTEMIC DESIGN NEED?

Specifically, the structure of the online workshop provides a brief preliminary introduction by the facilitator regarding the organization of the session itself, the topics addressed in reference to contemporary complex issues and expected outcomes. Subsequently, space will be given to the participants, in the maximum number of 25 people, who will have to work in groups by adopting a cooperative and tinkering approach. In fact, each participant in the online workshop will have an active role in reflecting on their knowledge of the discipline of Design, with particular attention to systemic design, sharing their ideas with the rest of the attendees.

The established methodology is hybrid and takes its cue from social science methods and tools, already adopted by co-design, such as co-design workshop, design probe, generative toolkit, etc. In detail, the participants will be divided into groups of 4/5 people each, who will work in a collective space set up on the Miro platform. The entire cooperative and immersive (tinkering) work session is divided into two moments, characterized by two specific but connected design tools. In the first phase, the *tarot question cards* tool will be used. It consists in 25 illustrative cards that participants will have to use, within their groups, to "read their partners' thoughts". This first exercise is to break the ice, to start getting in touch and creating the first relationships and connections with the people you collaborate with. A time limit will be given for discussion, at the end of which each group will be asked to choose five tarot cards, represented by keywords, which according to them best describe what the design needs to develop a systemic approach and an eco-social perspective.

Once the time is up, each group will return to the plenary online session to present their choices, sharing and discussing them with everyone.

PHASE 2: DESIGNING AMONG RELATIONS, SYSTEMS, PROCESSES

The second phase of the online workshop starts from a reflection of the individual groups about the chosen tarot cards, which will have to be "put into a systemic frame" also in the light of the reflections shared by all the participants in the plenary session. Specifically, this second exercise leads the participants to find the flows and relationships between the keywords (concepts) reported in the chosen tarot question cards, collaborating to design a *system map* or a *moodboard* that delves into the concepts that emerged and proposing new scenarios for systemic design. The system map or the moodboard will show the five keywords representing the tarot question cards previously chosen by the groups, together with the integration of bibliographic, iconographic, filmographic references, etc., at the discretion of each working group

The proposed design tools were conceived as *boundary objects* - dialogical tools - with the specific aim of stimulating reflection starting from the power of language. Through open questions relating to the contemporary scenario, the aim is to understand what participants think about cooperation - understood as mutual, collective and tinkering (design) action.

At the end of the two phases, the Mentimeter tool will be used for a quick survey (maximum three questions) to ask the participants - who in this case will answer individually - what they think of using a cooperative and tinkering approach, relocating to the initial question posed as a subtitle of the workshop proposal: *can a cooperative and tinkering approach be a strategic tool for systemic design to develop an eco-social perspective and to tackle complex issues in a more sustainable way?*

Workshop format

100 minutes | online | maximum number of participants 25 | using Miro, Mentimeter

Workshop agenda

0:00 – 0:10 Welcome & participants brief presentation

0:10 – 0:25 Plenary Introduction to *DESIGN WITH TOGETHERNESS: cooperation among relations, systems, processes*

0:25 – 0:30 Creation of the 4/5 groups of participants

0:30 – 0:50 Phase 1: What does systemic design need? (*teamwork session*)

0:50 – 0:60 Sharing of the reflections emerged from the Phase 1 with all the attendees

0:60 – 0:80 Phase 2: Designing among relations, systems, processes? (*teamwork session*)

0:80 – 0:90 Sharing of the reflections emerged from the Phase 2 with all the attendees

0:90 – 1:00 Quick Mentimeter survey, Thanks for participation and Farewell

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