

# ATTENDING [TO] FUTURES ATTENDING [TO] FUTURES ATTENDING [TO] FUTURES

## Matters of Politics in Design Education, Research, Practice

The conference ATTENDING [TO] FUTURES examines the ambivalent role and responsibility of design as world-making at a moment in which the world »is presented in crisis« (Ghosn, Jazairy). Acknowledging the ways in which design (as practices, forms of knowledge, and sets of objects) is accountable for social and environmental injustice, the conference invites critical perspectives that scrutinize unchallenged disciplinary norms and dominant ways of knowing, being, doing, and imagining in design education, research, and practice. Drawing on current de-/anti-colonial, post-humanist, queer-feminist and disability discourses, the conference attempts a political reprogramming of design in order to generate transformative perspectives on design education, research, and practice.

### 1 **Contested Histories** — Unlearning

The first panel critically revises and problematizes the eurocentric, patriarchal, colonial, environmentally untenable, and capitalist traditions in which design is embedded and calls for an »unlearning« (Gayatri Spivak) of discriminatory, exclusive, oppressive, and »defuturing« (Toni Fry) codes and design practices that came into being because of them. The aim of this panel is to expose normative definitions of design, design epistemologies, and established ways of learning in order to understand »why we design, what we design« (loosely based on Mary Lawhon) and to recognize how design produces inequality and subjugation.

### 2 **Radical Futures** — Attending [to]

The second panel considers design's inherent demand to explore, test, and produce material-discursive configurations that do not (yet) exist (Séverine Marguin et al.) in order to imagine and constitute radically different worlds and form the basis of future design (Daniel Gethmann et al.). Through this lens, the future is addressed as a present »space of becoming« inclusive, empathetic, just, and sustainable (Bill Ashcroft). Designing the future means both attending, i.e. active participation in, and attending to, i.e. taking responsibility and care for, creative ways of living together with people, things, animals, and plants. All future-making strategies require asking whether designs of new possible worlds leave social, political, and economical power structures untouched or whether they undermine and change them.

### 3 **Critical Practices** — Leading Out

The third panel proceeds from the etymology of education: latin »educare« not as »e-ducere«—i.e. »leading someone to something«—but as »ex-ducere«, »leading someone out« of the familiar (Tim Ingold). Attention to the constitutive conditions of design requires a reckoning with a multiplicity of actors and contexts, from institutional norms and regulations, to pedagogies, curricula, materials, architectural environments, and discursive protocols. This panel therefore focuses on and calls for the transformation of everything that helps bring design into being: physical and digital tools, as well as their material infrastructures and legitimating disciplinary narratives.

**WE ASK FOR CONTRIBUTIONS that are related to  
but not limited to the following questions and topics:**

- How are design practices embedded in socio-political contexts and hegemonic power structures and how do they (re-)produce exclusion?
- How can persistent structures of systemic oppression and privilege in design be recognized and changed?
- How can approaches for the invention and constitution of future worlds be developed without perpetuating pejorative constructions of race, class, gender and ability?
- How can we reprogram education, research and practice, in order to lead design out of defuturing ways of knowing, being, and doing?
- How can we deal with the »monsters« (Ahmed Ansari) that design helps to create and that inversely help design into being?
- How do supposed design innovations contribute to the destruction of possible futures, rather than opening up new spaces of possibility?
- What does a critical revision and transformation of contested histories and entrenched narratives entail?
- Which counter-hegemonic projects already exist, and how can they be amplified and mobilized?
- How can design itself be employed as a tool to critically examine the socio-political configuration of historical events as well as to create possible futures?
- What are the modalities of education as defamiliarization?
- Which tools, methods, and media can be used to develop things, material practices, images, spaces, and bodies that transform existing hegemonies and subversively reverse normative orders?

**WE ACCEPT AND ENCOURAGE  
SUBMISSIONS OF DIFFERENT  
FORMATS**

- TALKS  
(word + images/video)
- PRESENTATION/EXHIBITION  
of research projects (word + images/video  
+ prototypes/artifacts)
- WORKSHOPS  
(with conference participants)
- PERFORMANCES  
(live or video)
- OTHER FORMATS

TALKS/PRESENTATIONS  
**20 minutes**

WORKSHOPS/DISCUSSIONS  
**1 or 2 hours**

OTHER  
**20 minutes or 1 hour**

**KEY DATES**

SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS  
**April 05, 2021**

ABSTRACT FEEDBACK  
**May 07, 2021**

CONFERENCE  
**November 18–20, 2021**

**SUBMISSION MODALITIES**

Abstract of submission (500 words max.,  
if needed, up to 5 images can be included)  
Short biography (200 words max.)

PDF file via e-mail to  
→ [submission@attendingtofutures.de](mailto:submission@attendingtofutures.de)

### PUBLICATION

Subject to review, selected speakers will be invited to develop full written papers for inclusion in either an Online KISDedition Publication, a Special Issue publication, or in a specially produced conference book.

### COVID19

The conference is intended to take place at KISD and in person following an elaborated hygiene concept, but will be transformed into an online event, if regulations with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic prohibit physical large-scale events.

### COSTS

We are happy to recommend or aid speakers in finding accommodation (travel and accommodation self-financed). We will provide food and drinks during the conference. Attending the conference as a listener will be free of charge.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Landry, Donna and Gerald MacLean (eds.): The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, New York / London: Routledge 1996