NEW EDUCATION CIRCLE

Design impulses for education International Roundtable
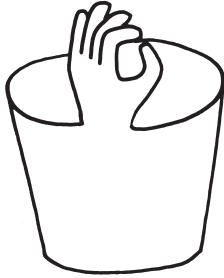
I would advise young people to look at everything they encounter in a critical light. Then I would urge them at all times to be self-critical.

Josef Müller-Brockmann

NEW EDUCATION CIRCLE

Proposals for today. And for tomorrow. …
A basis for discussion

The **NEW EDUCATION CIRCLE (NEC)** developed out of the awareness and conviction that the ongoing changes seen in today's society are driven by digitalization and the current ecological crisis alike. We believe that this calls for a fundamental re-orientation, specifically in the field of education.

It is our mission at NEC to explore the potential of design (methods) and creative technologies in this context and to develop proposals as to how their inherent potential can be used in practice, in a national, European and also international context.

Based on the idea of an international roundtable, we want to enter into a dialogue with designers of all kinds of backgrounds and expertise. Our aim is to challenge established ways of thinking and to add to existing points of view. We want to create an open exchange about our various ideas of the future of education.

During our first workshop on national level only, due to Corona restrictions, held from October 16 to 18, 2020, we established a basis that we intend to develop further together with our international partners. The instigators are Boris Kochan and the late Dr. Silke Claus, together with their respective organisations Deutscher Designtag and bayern design. The participants of the first workshop included Veronika Burian, Prof Lutz Engelke, Prof Martin Foessleitner, Prof Markus Hanzer, Prof Susanne Lengyel, Prof Dr Oliver Ruf, Ulrich Müller, and Gabriele Werner.

The range of issues debated at the workshop included the following:

- How can we complement the existing curriculum of our schools and develop activities for children and teenagers to promote creativity and methodology that will help them face the transformation of society?

- How can design as a meta discipline contribute to the actual realisation of life-long learning? And how can creative training systems be integrated systematically to become an integral part of professional life?

- What will the future education of designers look like? How can designers keep up-to-date – with regards to both technology and methodology – after having completed their formal education and working in a field in which the only constant is change?

Design competency equals educational achievement

We defined the following areas of expertise and competency to help make design and designing methods relevant in the context of these issues:

1. Design builds bridges between people and shapes the way people interact with each other and their surroundings. In so doing, design helps optimise the usability of media, processes and objects while also creating a sense of purpose.

2. Design supports people and communities, helps them express their individuality and differentiate their profile from that of others.

3. Design helps people orient themselves and promotes learning.

4. Design facilitates communication and provides people with vital impulses for their lives together.
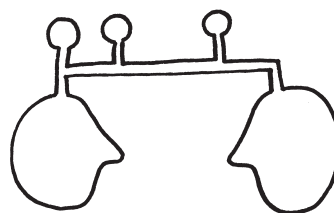
5. Design makes cutting-edge technology accessible to people and helps prevent them from being excluded from progress and society at large.

6. Design is a vital factor in the recording and organisation of the immense amount of data available in the world of today.

7. Design helps meet people's desire for surrounding themselves with beautiful and original things. In this sense, design is much more than the outcome of professional, methodical processes; it is a cultural and creative act. Design manifests the aesthetic ideals of a culture. In addition, design is an active agent of cultural change – when design conventions are broken as part of the creative process, unusual images and symbols emerge, which in turn strengthen the identity of new ideas. They bring about changed values, make them more visible and emphasize their presence. Design invigorates culture.

8. Design heightens our senses, requires empathy and has a direct impact on our lives. Change is the true domain of designers.
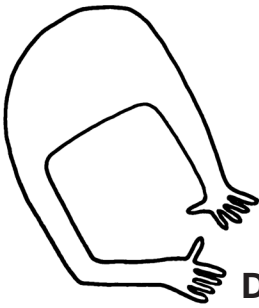
Design as the (new) driver of education

Looking at the various fields of competencies, it becomes clear to what extent creative methods and creative technologies will be key in making new approaches and ways of thinking visible and more accessible. In turn, they will help illustrate the much-needed paradigm shift in society, help people understand, implement and ultimately shape the resulting transformation.

Education has always illustrated the tools and methods used to influence behaviour impacting society. In today's world, however, traditional methodologies and ways of learning no longer seem enough to meet current demands, let alone those of the future.

If we want people to think differently, to enjoy thinking outside the box, to experiment with an open mind – provided they get access to creative and digital tools – we must reach out to them at an early age. It is also the moment to lay the foundation for life-long learning.

For that reason, combining education with design competency is the ideal way to establish and strengthen this much-needed, wholistic way of thinking.
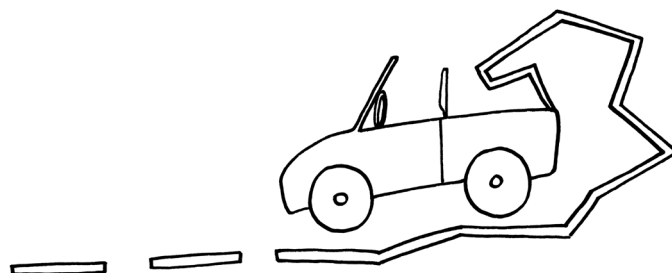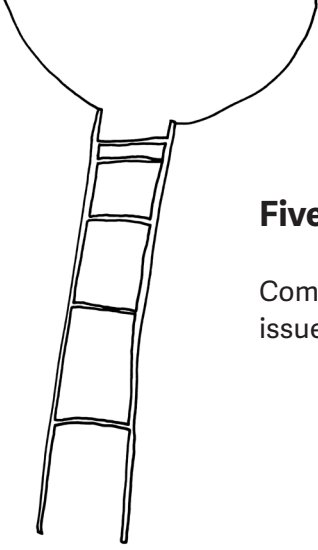
Five concrete layers of action

Combining design and education will create a synergy, in which the following issues will be key:

Creative methods and creative technologies – learning with a passion as early adopters. The required basic training for all citizens to become digitally literate must go beyond the mere technical aspects of the field and include the basics of design.

Interdisciplinary and intercultural – diversity and flexibility result from an exchange and education serves to create new communities. Interdisciplinary activities and the promotion of intercultural synergies are an integral part of current thinking about design and today's design practice.

Circular learning – the old learning from the young and the young from the old. Education needs to take place in an environment free of fear and hierarchy – a place, where experience and pioneering spirit come together to thrive. It is specifically the theoretical and practical competencies that designer acquire in the fields of Design Thinking, UX design and Social Design that illustrate such integrative approaches to circular learning.

Progress through tolerating failure – our current, rigid way of grading school work is no longer adequate in an increasingly individualised society. For that reason, it is imperative to develop new methods and systems of evaluation that take these changes into account. In truly understanding the expertise inherent in design and its complex effects with regards to ever-changing conditions, we can unlock its enormous potential and contribute to the much-needed, more flexible approach in the field.

Learning environments are the labs of the future – universities, cultural institutions and economic partners are asked to create and develop new spaces to promote radically new design for learning environments, which in turn will create suitable opportunities for the re-shaping of our society in the process.
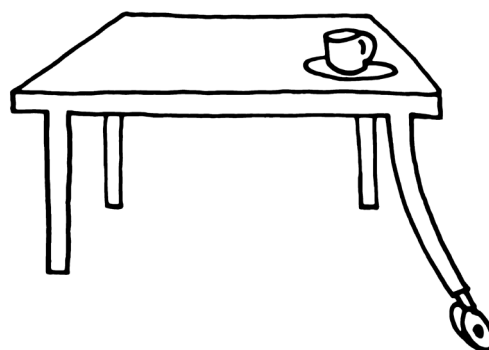
Conclusion and outlook

As two distinct areas, design and education are fields that can learn from each other, grow with each other and depend on each other. In today's world, many countries' state-funded educational systems are lagging behind their ever-changing societies. They have also fallen far behind with regards to economic and technological developments – in the time it takes for a school system to change, creative technologies have re-invented themselves two or three times over and will, once again, be ahead. Working without continuously educating oneself and expanding one's skill set has become all but impossible in today's labour markets. During the ongoing covid 19 pandemic, we became aware of how digitalisation as well as ways of working and work processes are constantly changing in line with what is technologically possible and that this will hold true for the future as well. And this is the starting point for New Education Circle, the point where we begin developing our concepts on how to harness the full potential of professional fields such as design, architecture and other cultural and creative areas for the greater good. Together, we want to find a virtual and physical space that allows for the further development of such ideas and thought models. We are looking for an entirely novel kind of workshop, where scientists and researchers, experts in transformation and artists can explore the idea of education and, in a very concrete manner, put their own potential to the test.
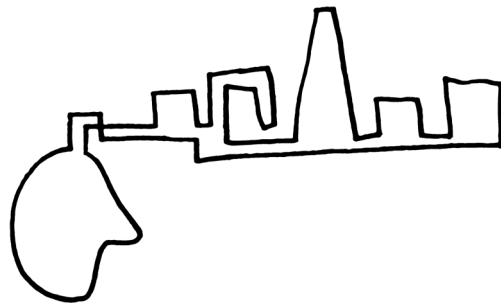
And would it not be possible for such a space to be part of the new European Bauhaus movement that Ursula von der Leyen suggested in her speech to the state of the European Union? Is it not therefore a logical step to consider design and education together under such one roof...

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