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Beyond Change was the title of this year's research conference of the Swiss Design Network. It opened its doors symbolically on International Women's Day – 8 March 2018. During the process of accreditation, visitors were given a pink badge with the motto "*Beyond ~~Change~~ Patriarchy*". The conference programme had been carefully designed by the team of Prof. Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim, with the assistance of Vera Sacchetti, Sarah Haug and Julia Sommerfeld. It was progressive in nature and provided a forum for self-critical topics that have long become urgent and compelling within the discipline, and that also relate to social transformation. Here, looking back, is a personal selection of the challenges, issues and statements that emerged.

What power structures do designers reproduce? What discriminatory structures can be revealed, reflected upon and overcome at educational institutions for design? What claims to interpretational sovereignty exist in the design discourse, and whose interests do they represent? How can we achieve a paradigm shift in understanding the terms of design? What can "progress" mean in the 21st century? How and where can a decolonialist, feminist design practice find expression? And how may supportive design processes and products be created?

As a lecturer and mentor in process design at the HyperWerk Institute, I was especially attracted by the panels and keynotes dealing with what design actually means, what awareness it involves, and how this might be reflected in training and research.

This symposium was trailblazing because its different formats created a productive friction that promoted critical reflection about the concept of design from the most varied theoretical and practical perspectives. Besides classical keynotes, there were also more open, discursive formats at which the response of the audience was animated, at times even heated. The coffee breaks enabled visitors to exchange opinions on the new perspectives that had opened up, and also to get an impression of what was happening in the parallel sessions of the conference. The collectives "Depatriarchise Design", "Decolonising Design" and "Precarity Pilot" were active in the foyer. Their programmes invited the audience to participate in personal discussions about topics such as employment conditions, privileges and approaches to difference. The conference venue also offered snacks, a library and workspaces. The event overall offered an ideal experience of how hospitality can provide fruitful ground for eye-to-eye debate.

If design wishes to make a contribution to reflective transformation in society, designers will have to use their past experiences to develop a sense of awareness as to the fundamentally political influence that their profession can exert. This was the stance of Kenny Cupers, a professor in the history and theory of architecture and urbanisation from the University of Basel. His paper showed that designing spaces, structures and buildings offers a mirror of how a nation understands itself and acts. For example, the use of the "Heimatstil" in Namibia served to legitimise a feeling of "home" among the German colonial masters. A trivialising concept of identity was thereby provided for violent political interests.

The collective "Decolonising Design" took this as its own starting point. Decolonising design and design history means investigating the concept of "design" to investigate what it actually devalues. It was discussed how belonging to specific nations, genders and classes can lead to individuals assuming a position as privileged spokespersons in society. This kind of intersectional deconstruction reveals universal ideologies and claims to interpretational sovereignty as strategies for maintaining power. By focusing on the catastrophic consequences of colonial behaviour, which have an impact down to the present day, design tasks can be compelled to leave their sphere of supposed neutrality. Cupers closed with the question as to what "undesign" might mean in the context of Eurocentric notions of the Modern and its exploitative colonial history.

The design historian Kjetil Fallan of the University of Oslo showed how the concept of sustainability has developed in Norway, taking the biography of the architect Robert Esdaile as an example. In the 1970s, Esdaile strongly advocated rethinking the manner and the environment in which teaching takes place. He was in favour of so-called "motherships" in cities, with "satellites" elsewhere, where life and work could be observed, investigated and designed in relation to different environments. Students, he said, ought to spend their time in these satellites, away from civilisation, accompanied by experts in sociology, geography and biology. From today's perspective, these ideas for decentralised educational structures seem highly promising. The audience raised one particular point of criticism, however, namely the need to incorporate indigenous knowledge in such fieldwork. Once again, the potential for conflict about claims to interpretational sovereignty in knowledge was revealed, and with it the question was raised as to how knowledge is legitimised or ignored.

Mia Charlene White is an assistant professor in environmental studies at the New School in New York, and is active in spatial policy and auto-ethnography. Together with her students, she is developing fields of action and imaginary spaces in connection with their own corporeal and institutional spaces and the poetics of possession. She proposed making visible the power conflicts that occur in spaces by making every person reveal the situation from which they are speaking. By confessing their own vulnerability and engaging in the concomitant "trauma work", White sees fundamental potential for furthering trust and healing within a society. White opened with the metaphor of the blues: "The blues plays what is not there", offering a possibility of affective resistance such as has been practised by blacks since the days of slavery. White believes that it might be possible, together, to make visible the trauma of colonial history (and thus of modern history), and thereby avoid repeating it. To White, it is essential that feelings of injury should not be suppressed any more. She calls this collective endeavour "love practice" and relates it to the "wake work" that Christina Sharpe describes. Only in this manner, she believes, can we have an opportunity to agree on what cannot be solved and thus resist its continuation. For White, this means leaving behind us what we thought we already knew, and creating space in a radical act of openness through the concept of becoming.

What consequences could there be for the research and practice of designers if we were to acknowledge our own vulnerability, and at the same time our involvement in systematic

discrimination? What topics would remain beyond the safe waters of our modern belief in progress? Would this create the opportunity to formulate, design and occupy protected spaces of solidarity in the face of the prevailing powers-that-be – not in order to iron out differences, but to enable real encounters?

Ramia Mazé is a design researcher and professor at Aalto University in Helsinki, and she utilised her own feminist practice to show what ideas and effects – both conscious and unconscious – lurk behind the decisions made in institutional structures and new curricula, and also in seemingly straightforward matters such as providing sources and references. Her own "nerdy" meticulousness revealed that, despite being sensitised to achieving a balance between women and men, even she always reproduces an unconscious imbalance by quoting more men.

A conscious approach to systemic discrimination within institutional structures can only be achieved if this is also problematised within the course of study. As a result, thematising asymmetrical power relations also has to take place within the curriculum. For this reason, Mazé is in favour of developing decisions in collective bargaining processes while incorporating the different hierarchical levels of an institution, and she believes that such power relations should be taken into consideration when appointing spokespersons for that institution.

The design researcher Miriam Lahusen from the Design Research Lab of the Berlin University of the Arts deconstructed the "desire to design" by means of a pedagogical experiment. In the methodology seminar that she presented, she divided up this manner of ideas development into three phases: first, observing an everyday situation that is assessed as being problematic; secondly, an intervention that suggests a solution to the problem; and thirdly a joint act of reflection among the students. At the latest during the student discussion, it becomes obvious that what one person regards as a meaningful solution is in fact a subjective opinion.

What it means to have ideas, to make suggestions or determine solutions for other people is something that Lahusen examines together with her students. She adopts a very practice-oriented perspective, and this three-step method gives her students a tool that promotes joint, self-critical reflection and a political awareness with regard to their desire to intervene in their environment.

Several times during the conference, both at podium discussions and at lunch, there were animated discussions about the role of designers and their self-understanding. The usual task of a designer is to provide solutions to problems without actually engaging with the consequences of this logic. Kevin Walker, Head of Information Experience Design at the Royal College of Art, spoke in favour of a greater awareness of these consequences during the panel discussion on "Redefining Design Education". He went so far as to say: "Design is a competence without comprehension". He believes that designers should no longer be left to believe that they could provide solutions for a world as complex as ours has become. There were voices at the conference who insisted that the design profession needs a new "figuration". In this regard, the suggestion was made that designers should be understood more as "troublemakers" than as "solutionists". This could mean that designers might become catalysts for constructive conflict

resolution. In this context, it was also discussed whether the notion of "success" and "progress" ought to be reconsidered at universities.

The conference *Beyond Change* touched on fundamental issues, and it was refreshing how little everyone beat about the bush. It was shown from different perspectives that "wanting" to design is permeated by individual value concepts. Every decision that is made during the design process is thus either consciously or unconsciously political.

If design is truly to bring about societal change, then its definition(s), its fields of impact and its actors must be analysed and subjected time and again to critical questioning. This shifts the focus onto the curricula of design training institutions and onto research as a lever of transformation. The educational and design background to decisions made by heads of institutes and lecturers about the structure, content and formats of their courses will be of crucial importance to future designers.

At the close of this symposium, it was clear that a paradigm shift is imminent, also at Swiss design universities. It became clear that any claim to universal solutions is a Eurocentric fantasy of omnipotence. Nevertheless, the concept of design to many still connotes a capital-driven desire to satisfy needs. Would it be conceivable to conceive of design practice as a practical act of solidarity? Then the concept of "competition" would at least become superfluous. And what "success" and "progress" might mean could be redefined. Inspiration would no longer be equivalent to plundering ideas, as it was described by Tanveer Ahmed of the Open University/Royal College of Art in London in her paper entitled "Rethinking Fashion Design Pedagogies in the Era of Globalisation". Instead, its goal would be to discard specific customs and modes of thought. It would place our focus on what it could mean to decolonise, together with others. It would open up a perspective and options for action that might strive towards well-founded sustainability and a diligent approach to our fellow human beings. This would mean we could no longer cover up history, discrimination and injury, but learn together how we might confront them. It would mean recognising that our work as designers takes place in a collective act of conflict resolution in which different values come together. It would not simply be about searching for solutions or laying claiming to neutrality, but would mean taking a specific stance within conflicts, making these visible, and reflecting on our own values. This would be bound up with developing the means and methodologies to enable us to reduce societal asymmetries and to pass on our own privileges to others. The new task for designers could then be to see themselves as part of a life-affirming world, bearing consequences, designing spaces of solidarity, and taking a stand.

I would like to refer the reader here to further reports on *Beyond Change* that engage with other, important aspects, perspectives and points of discussion from the conference. These offer necessary, other voices, views and arguments that serve to challenge the status quo from all kinds of directions:

https://depatriarchisedesign.wordpress.com/2018/05/02/closer-looks-at-beyond-change-what-can-a-design-conference-do-by-benedetta-crippa-part-1/

https://depatriarchisedesign.wordpress.com/2018/05/04/closer-looks-at-beyond-change-what-can-a-design-conference-do-by-benedetta-crippa-part-2/

https://depatriarchisedesign.wordpress.com/2018/05/07/closer-looks-at-beyond-change-supporting-structures-by-anja-neidhardt/