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Editorial: Design Education for the General Public

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Design education for the general public is regarded as a catalyst for a move towards a better user participation in design processes and a higher awareness of everyday consumer choices. By educating the general public to become design literate, there is a chance for improved cooperation with professional designers and a possible move towards sustainable societies. The challenge is to articulate content, performance and continuity for such a design education.

Some countries have mandatory design education through primary and lower secondary school, while other countries offer design education solely as an elective subject. Comparative curriculum studies can be found in international reports such as 'Education at a glance', but curriculum studies alone do not give insight in the content and quality of the studio/workshop practice. Some of the papers in this track will give such valuable insight into how design education is practiced. Others discuss organizational and/or philosophical aspects for design education.

The concept 'design literacy' addresses the complex matter of objectives, content and practices in design education. Research on multiple literacies has evoked considerable debate and redefinition within several areas of educational research (Coiro et al. 2008); it is no longer bound to the understanding of literacy as the ability to read and write verbal text (Moats 2000). Visual literacy (Stankiewicz 2003), media literacy (Buckingham 2003), ecological literacy (Stegall 2006) and design literacy (Nielsen & Brænne, 2013) are among such newly coined literacies. Design literacy is connected both to the creation and understanding of design in a broad sense, and is not limited to only graphic design. Design literacy is regarded as a competence not only for the professional designer, but also for lay people in their position as users, decision makers, and consumers (Nielsen & Digranes 2007; Dong 2008).

Designed artefacts and services influence our lives and values, both from personal and societal perspectives. Designers, decision makers, investors, and consumers hold different positions in the design process, but they all make choices that will influence our future. In order to solve crucial global challenges, designers and lay people must cooperate; for this purpose, we argue that design literacy is necessary for all. We argue that the design literacies can underpin practices associated with democratic participation in design processes, developing and enacting ethical responsibilities, and understanding and supporting sustainable aspects of production and consumption.

Therefore, the track aims to explore the following points:

- How development of design literacy can be supported in general education from primary to higher education



- How design education for the general public can represent both a foundation for professional design education and a prequalification for lay persons' competence for decision-making
- How might design literacy influence sustainability issues in society?
- What connections exist between the different levels of design education from primary to the university level?
- How design education contributes to perceived and experienced curricula
- What is the relationship between design education and ideological curricula?

Research addressing above points will be useful to inform changes in policy and educational implementation. The importance lies in the needs to better inform design education itself, to improve the quality of design educators, and to educate reflective consumers.

The papers

The papers in this track represent an insight in how design education for the general public is performed in Norway, Chile, Australia, South Korea, China and in the United Arab Emirates. The approaches in the papers are multiple. Some of them focus on the content of design education at university level, while other focus on design education in primary and secondary schools. The two are however interconnected, as design education at university level is closely related to how design education is performed at lower levels. Changes in curriculum is not enough to change educational practices.

Both creativity and technology are central themes in the papers, and there is no focus on excluding the one for the other – rather the opposite. Both creativity and technology are central in developing innovation skills and attitudes. The use of Augmented Reality (AR) and the development of Toolkits can illustrate the complexity. Some of the papers emphasize the importance of combining tradition and technology in design education. Other papers have a focus on how evaluation can influence design practice. Culture and sustainability are also themes in several papers.

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