

P / REFERENCES OF DESIGN



THE CONVERSATIONS OF DESIGN.

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ABSTRACT | Even in its most elementary manifestation as involving just a single designer and a single client, designing is a process of interaction between different people who command different bodies of knowledge and who approach the design process from different perspectives and expectations, and most design processes involve a much wider range of stakeholders and expertise. The mobilization of this varied cast of characters and the sustaining of a process of working together towards a common goal requires an ongoing web of interactions and exchanges among the participants in the context of conversations.

Additionally, efforts toward achieving more inclusive and informed design processes underscore the importance given by designers to achieving more effective modes of engaging non-designers in the conversation of design (Floyd et al., 1989). Growing attention is being paid to processes of design undertaken by communities of heterogeneous individuals and (not necessarily involving designers) in addressing issues in their own lives (Manzini, 2015). This broadens the meaning of design to include processes involving the efforts and intentions of diverse others in practices that transcend the understanding of design as a special purview of professionals operating in controlled teams.

The impacts and implications of design processes and the designed things that they put out into the world, though, are felt by others even beyond this broadened perspective on the communities of design, to include a wide swathe of members of society, who are thus also drawn into the conversations of design. This workshop aims to explore what a cybernetic perspective can contribute to our understanding of communal processes of design.

The field of Second-order Cybernetics explicitly links processes of conversation and processes of design. Pangaro has argued that conversation and design are analogous processes through which goals and understandings are negotiated through interaction (Pangaro, 2008). By this reckoning, there is no designing that is not co-designing. Gordon Pask's (1975) Conversation Theory, as further elaborated by Glanville (2004), asserts that all learning happens by the communal construction of understanding through conversations. Different types of conversation, each with its role, are central to the processes of design (Dubberly & Pangaro, 2009). Within the field of Design Cybernetics (Glanville; Fischer & Herr, 2019), Conversation Theory has been applied to articulate Design as a set of nested conversations at levels spanning from the design team to society at large (Jachna, 2019).

Workshop participants will undertake a series of awareness-building and diagramming exercises to elucidate the actual and potential conversations involved at different levels in their design practice, building up from the conversations within the design team incrementally to the level of the conversations between one's design practice and design products and the myriad of systems and practices in society and the world at large. This approach will provide a framework and conceptual/practical tools for an intentional and methodical approach to engaging in the conversations of design.



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