Research Network for Design Anthropology

Conference Call: Design Anthropological Futures
August 13-14, 2015

Ethnographies of the Possible
Interventionist Speculations
Collaborative Formations of Issues
Things in the Making

CONFERENCE THEMES
The Design Anthropological Futures conference explores future-making from a design anthropological perspective. The concept of futures relates both to the creation of visions and practices of the possible through transformative processes of anthropology and design, and to the exploration of new frontiers for the field of design anthropology.

Design anthropology is an emerging transdisciplinary field, which is enjoying growing attention in recent years. In an interconnected world where the boundaries between physical, social and digital environments become increasingly challenged, the conventional distinctions between social science and design research no longer hold. The conference explores different perspectives on design anthropology as a holistic and critical approach to complex everyday and societal issues, with the aim of creating potential futures with diverse communities and stakeholders.

With a starting point in a forthcoming book based on a selection of papers (to be made available to the participants) prepared under the auspices of the Research Network for Design Anthropology (2013-2015) the conference addresses future concerns in design anthropology, and its particular approaches to futures-in-the-making through two keynote speeches, four thematic discussions and an exhibition space for workshops on emerging design anthropological practices.

With this call we invite participation of researchers, professionals and research students with an interest in these concerns in design anthropology. Participants can prepare their contributions to the conference discussions by submitting position statements for the thematic discussions or by proposing exhibits and workshop proposals for the exhibition space (for details of submission see below). Participation without submissions is also welcome, but the total number is limited to 100 participants.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM:

Opening keynote: Alison Clarke
Alison J. Clarke is Professor of Design History and Theory and Director of the Victor J. Papanek Foundation at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. She will relate contemporary concerns in design anthropology with her research on the historical origins of design’s intertwining with anthropology and in particular its relationship to the activist politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Discussion I: Ethnographies of the Possible
Perhaps the most evident difference between design and anthropology is their respective temporal orientation (Otto and Smith 2013). By exploring "ethnographies of the possible," our aim is to shed light on the peculiar space betwixt and between the present(s) and the future(s), a space that is highly contested in practice, yet relatively unexplored in theoretical terms (Vangkilde 2012; Halse 2013; Kjærgaard 2011). How do the processes through which
imaginary artifacts are conceived and materialized unfold? What characterizes the space of the possible? How do designers and anthropologists contribute to it? And what are the methodological implications of conducting ethnography in a distorted here-and-now, a partly fictional space that resists full articulation?

The discussion will take its starting point in the following papers made available to the participants:

- Scaffolding Futures: Emergence and Intervention in Design Anthropology, Rachel C. Smith, Dept. for Aesthetics & Communication, Aarhus University, and Ton Otto, Dept. for Culture & Society, Aarhus University
- The New Ethnographers: Design Activism 1968-1974, Alison Clarke, Institute of Design, University of Applied Arts, Vienna
- The Transformative Potential of Design Anthropology: Materials, Ecology and Temporality, Mike Anusas, University of Strathclyde and Rachel Joy Hardness, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Aberdeen
- Forms and Politics of Design Futures, Ramia Mazé, Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, and KTH Royal Institute of Technology Stockholm

The discussion will be moderated by Ton Otto and Rachel Smith from Aarhus University based on book chapters in the forthcoming book and submitted position statements from participants. The discussion is opened by a short presentation by Ramia Mazé from Konstfack / Aalto University.

Discussion II: Interventionist Speculation

Design is evidently centered on intervention due to its focus on creating attractive visions for the future (Halse 2008), but anthropology too, is essentially intervening in the worlds and lives of the people under study (Hastrup 2003). Interventionist speculation poses a productive line of connection between design and anthropology. What happens when e.g. conventional design methods such as sketching, conceptualization and prototyping are used to raise new ethnographic questions and outputs? Can the particular staging of new possibilities be seen as a new mode of ethnographic inquiry into people’s concerns, aspirations, and imaginative horizons? How can interventions serve as a method of research through design, i.e. as a proper occasion for knowledge production?

The discussion will take its starting point in the following papers made available to the participants:

- Design Interventions as a Form of Inquiry, Joachim Halse, School of Design, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts
- The Forms and Norms of Ethnography Meshed Between Projects of Design and Socially Active Art, George E. Marcus, Dept. of Anthropology, University of California, Irvine
- Interventions, Speculations and Correspondences between Design and Anthropology in the City: a Carioca Experience, Zoy Anastassakis, School of Industrial Design, University of Río de Janeiro
- Speculative Interventions as Inquiry, Carl DiSalvo, School of Literature, Communication & Culture, Georgia Institute of Technology

The discussion will be moderated by Joachim Halse from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design and Rachel Smith from Aarhus University based on book chapters in the forthcoming book and submitted position statements from participants. The discussion is opened by a short presentation by Carl DiSalvo from Georgia Institute of Technology (to be confirmed).

Discussion III: Collaborative Formations of Issues

Participation and collaboration have become a strong convergence point between design and anthropology, not least due to the ability of ethnographers to mobilize and engage ‘ordinary people’ in professional design processes. Recently a more intriguing concern with engaging people has emerged in the borderland between speculative design, participatory design, and the social sciences: What role does the socio-material setup play for how publics gather around an issue? What kinds of framing, scaffolding and politics are involved in such processes? How do we make the process of collaborative formations of issues available for anthropological scrutiny not after the fact, but while it takes place? While such issues are key in design anthropology, they remain little explored in theoretical terms.

The discussion will take its starting point in the following papers made available to the participants:

- Para-ethnography 2.0: An Experiment with the Distribution of Perspective in Collaborative Fieldwork, Kasper Tang Vangkilde, Dept. for Culture & Society, Aarhus University and Morten Hulvej, Institute of Public Health, University of Southern Denmark
- On the Fly, On the Wall: Eliciting Possibility from Corporate Impossibility, Brendon Clark, Interactive Institute Stockholm, and Melissa L. Caldwell, Dept. of Anthropology, University of California
- The Sound of Household Futures, Adam Drazin, Robert Knowles, Isabel Bredenbroeker, Anais Bloch, Dept. of Anthropology, University College London
- The Politics of Inviting to Designerly Public Engagement Åsa Ståhl and Kristina Lindström, School of Arts and Communication, Malmö University, and Institute of Design, Umeå University

The discussion will be moderated by Mette Kjærgaard from the University of Southern Denmark and Kasper Tang Vangkilde from Aarhus University based on book chapters in the forthcoming book and submitted position statements from participants. The discussion is opened by a short presentation by Adam Drazin from University College London (to be confirmed).
Discussion IV: Things in the Making

From within design theory Binder et al (2011) propose to treat design projects as socio-material assemblages of humans and artifacts. In this respect, the notion of ‘design things’ is used to capture the spaces where people gather to discuss and form or break alliances around an emerging issue. Within anthropology, the recent ‘material turn’ has placed particular emphasis on the agency of objects. As a result we have seen an increased interest in ‘things’ and the making of things as objects of and for research (Ingold 2013, Miller 2005, Henare et al 2007). These contributions constitute important stepping-stones towards a more detailed exploration of how the particular choreography involved in ‘thinging’, ‘staging’ and ‘fiction’ affect design anthropological endeavors.

The discussion will take its starting point in the following papers made available to the participants:

- Design Laboratories as Everyday Theatre: Encountering the Possible, Thomas Binder, School of Design, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts
- Things Making Things: An Ethnography of the Impossible, Elisa Giaccardi, Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering, Delft University of Technology, Chris Speed, School of Design, University of Edinburgh, and Neil Rubens, Institute of Technology, University of Electro-Communications, Tokyo.
- Experiments in Design Anthropology: Speculation, Accountability and Collaboration, Sissel Olander and Tau Ulv Lenskjoeld, School of Design, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts
- The Speculative and the Mundane - Future-making, Design Fiction and Anthropology, Mette Kjærgaard and Laurens Boer, SDU Design, University of Southern Denmark

The discussion will be moderated by Thomas Binder from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design and Mette Kjærgaard from the University of Southern Denmark based on book chapters in the forthcoming book and submitted position statements from participants. The discussion is opened by a short presentation by Elisa Giaccardi from TU Delft (to be confirmed).

Exhibition space for workshops: Emerging design anthropological practices

The encounters of design anthropology are unfolding in situated practices of both professional and academic work and these practices are only partly accessible through traditional modes of academic discourse. To stimulate inquiry and reflection on these unfolding practices, the conference invites exhibits that open up such design anthropological encounters. The exhibits will be present throughout the conference, and will also form the base for short on the fly workshops where exhibitors are encouraged to facilitate an engagement with the exhibits that can further the discussion on design anthropological practices.

The exhibition space and workshops are curated by Brendon Clark from Interactive Institute Stockholm and each exhibit/workshop will be accessible in timeslots of 30 minutes for an audience of approximately 15 people.

Closing keynote: George Marcus

Chancellor’s Professor George E. Marcus from Center for Ethnography, University of California, Irvine has been a leading figure in experimental ethnographic practice for more than two decades, and is specialized in collaborations at the core of ethnographic research. In his keynote he will present his reflections on the four thematic discussions and address how the coming together of design and anthropology may impact future experimental practices.

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

There are three ways to participate in the conference:

Position Statement. We encourage you to explore the preliminary outcome of the Network’s three preceding seminars (available here: https://kadk.dk/co-design/research-network-design-anthropology), and submit a position statement in response. The format of the position statement can be one of the following:
- a three page position paper (following this template), or
- a twitter-length statement (140 characters including spaces) and a high resolution .jpg photo suitable for print in A2 (see here for an example).

Position statements will be made available to conference participants.

Interactive exhibition. If you would like to share a concrete design anthropological experience in an interactive format this is for you. The format involves multi-sensory presentation material (visual, audio, physical etc.) along with a specific suggestion as to how an audience of approximately 15 persons can be invited into your concrete design anthropological encounter during a 30 minutes mini workshop. Submit a precise description of what you would like to exhibit, and how you expect people to interact with it.

Without submission. All interested are welcome to participate in the conference without submitting a contribution, simply by registering (here).

Capacity is limited to 100 seats. Participants with a submission are prioritized.
IMPORTANT DATES
Deadline for submission of position statements and Interactive Exhibition items: June 15, 2015.
Notification: Authors will be notified of acceptance of submissions soon after we receive them.
Registration (by email to the address below): May 10th - July 30th.
Conference: August 13th - 14th 2015

VENUE
The seminar will take place at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts - School of Design.
Street address: Fabriksmestervej 2, 1437 København K
Building 90: https://goo.gl/maps/k0nYo

ORGANIZERS
The Research Network for Design Anthropology is established in collaboration between the CoDesign Research Center (CODE) at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design, the Contemporary Ethnography program at the Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, and SDU Design at the University of Southern Denmark. All of these institutions have a strong track record of cultivating and furthering the field of design anthropology, both in terms of academic courses, PhD student supervision, conferences and publications. The strong ties and collaboration between the three institutions have created the platform for the development of the international Network for Design Anthropology and a planned book publication. The network is funded by the Danish Research Council (grant number 13923).

Website: https://kadk.dk/co-design/research-network-design-anthropology

REGISTRATION (includes conference dinner, lunches, coffee and conference materials)

[ ] Conference participation, professional: 1200 DKK
[ ] Conference participation, student: 600 DKK
[ ] Conference participation, helping out as volunteer: 0 DKK

Registration (and submissions) must be send to: designanthro-futures@kadk.dk

Organizing Committee:
Rachel Charlotte Smith, Assistant Professor of design anthropology at the Research Center for Participatory Information Technology (PIT), Aarhus University. Her research lies at the intersections of anthropology, participatory design and interactive technology. http://pure.au.dk/portal/en/persons/rachel-charlotte-smith.html

Kasper Tang Vangkilde, Assistant Professor of business, organization and design anthropology at the Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University. His research field lies within the borders of business anthropology, creativity and design. http://pure.au.dk/portal/en/persons/kasper-tang-vangkilde.html

Ton Otto, Professor of anthropology at Aarhus University and James Cook University, and head of Ethnographic Collections at Moesgaard Museum. He has published widely on anthropological theory and ethnography and worked with various visual media. http://pure.au.dk/portal/en/person/tonotto@cas.au.dk

Joachim Halse, Associate Professor of design anthropology at the CoDesign Research Center (CODE) at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design. He has extensive experience within participatory design, codesign and design anthropology. https://kadk.dk/en/employee/joachim-halse

Thomas Binder, Professor in codesign and part of the CoDesign Research Center (CODE) at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design. He has published widely on participatory design and open-ended exploratory design processes. https://kadk.dk/en/employee/thomas-binder

Mette Gislev Kjærgaard, Associate Professor of design anthropology at SDU Design, University of Southern Denmark where she works in the field of participatory innovation and makes extensive use of anthropological competencies in design and development processes. http://findresearcher.sdu.dk:8080/portal/en/person/mgk
DETAILED PROGRAM (to be confirmed).

Wednesday, 12 August 2015
14.00-17.00 Exhibition preparation and setup. 12 selected contributions are each provided a stand suitable for the presentation material and workshop format (e.g. a table and a display wall all depending on the content).

Welcome reception (venue to be announced) from 17:30

Thursday, 13 August 2015
08.30-09.00 Coffee/tea + arrivals.
09.00-09.15 Welcome by Organizing Committee
09.15-10.00 Opening Keynote: Alison Clarke.
10.00-10.30 Break + explore exhibition + sign up for 3 Thursday-workshops, and 3 Friday-workshops.
10.30-12.00 Discussion I. Intro: Ramia Mazé. Moderators Ton Otto & Rachel Smith.
12.00-13.00 Lunch
13.00-14.30 Workshops
Round 1: 13.00-13.30 stand 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11.
Round 2: 13.30-14.00 stand 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11.
Round 3: 14.00-14.30 stand 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11.
14.30-15.00 Break
15.00-16.30 Discussion II. Intro: Carl DiSalvo. Moderators: Joachim Halse & Rachel Smith.
17.00 See the Graduate Exhibition at the School of Design
18.30 Conference dinner.

Friday, 14 August 2015
08.30-09.00 Coffee + arrival
09.00-10.30 Discussion III. Intro: Adam Drazin, Moderators: Kasper Tang Vangkilde & Mette Kjersgaard.
10.30-11.00 Break
11.00-12.30 Workshops
Round 1: 12.30-13.00 stand 2, 4, 6, 8,10 and 12.
Round 2: 13.00-13.30 stand 2, 4, 6, 8,10 and 12.
Round 3: 13.30-14.00 stand 2, 4, 6, 8,10 and 12.
12.30-13.30 Lunch
13.30-15.00 Discussion IV. Intro: Elisa Giaccardi, Moderators: Thomas Binder & Mette Kjersgaard.
15.00-15.30 Break
15.30-16.15 Closing Keynote: George Marcus
16.15-17.00 Wrap-up and further perspectives: Organizing Committee.