'Engagencing'
The Design of Self-Governance

The project is based on the premise that future design practices will move beyond isolated fabrication, taking into consideration context, variation, and time, and becoming relational, eco-friendly, and responsive. The aim of this interactive exhibition is to explore the possibilities for new modalities of practice.

Project details

The Challenge
The design community has been in a state of flux since the turn of the 21st century, questioning the role of design within the broader context of society. The purpose of this student project is to explore the relation of design to democracy, new models of participatory design, and self-governance.

The Origins
Drawing on 'The Lancaster Care Charter', the proposed project discusses the role of the designer of the future, shifting away from the 'designer as hero' model to the notion of designer as someone who cares to understand people, things, and situations while systematically taking an inclusive approach and keeping their design processes and products open and transparent.

The Proposal
The 'Engagencing' project puts engagement, agency and doing at the centre of design research. Agency is understood as the content inscribed in every individual, the immanence of possibilities. Care (as doing) is conceived of as the vigour to actualize the identified possibilities. Engagement is ability to implement the possibility and acts as a paradigm. The newly coined concept is a way of building a foundation for the rebirth of active participation by all individuals in society. Accordingly, the authors of the project reject the existing "democratic system" as it reduces social involvement to indirect participation in the processes of representative democracy.

Hence, the proposal focuses on creating fairer opportunities for the individual's direct involvement in, and contribution to society.
Grassroots driven, it centres on creating the conditions for the emergence and viability of lasting emancipatory co-design practices. Making care the underlying principle of local participatory projects and practices can be seen as the core value of the project. In other words, 'engagencing' creates an interdependent three-way system (care-community-emancipation), which gains strength via active involvement, encourages agency, and acts as the cornerstone of the design of self-governance.

What will the visitor experience?
At the exhibition, visitors will be actively involved in the platform for local micro-action creation and sharing. We will design a virtual space for thriving initiatives and activation of personal agency.

About us
University of Ljubljana
Academy of Fine Arts and Design (the applicant)
As the oldest educational and artistic institution in the field of visual arts in Slovenia, the Academy strives to preserve excellence in educational, artistic, research and professional development activities. The Industrial Design and Applied Arts Department—a meeting point between western and eastern Europe—coalesced a broad panoply of experiences and cultures. One of its recent achievements was participation in the 2019 Milan Triennale.

In collaboration with the Pekinpah Association
The association brings together internationally acclaimed designers, theorists, architects, choreographers, and musicians. Pekinpah has facilitated artistic, cultural and scientific creation and developed theoretical discourse, as well as organising numerous events and research activities. Its focal point is to relentlessly question the state of the world.

The Team
Preliminary research for the project was conducted by nine postgraduate students. For the exhibition, the project was developed by Tino Duralija, Deja Kofol, and Jon Schwarzmann.

As students of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, and authors of the proposed project, we have held a number of exhibitions including the Academy's first virtual exhibition. In 2018, we were announced as one of the 'RSA Student Design Awards' winners and presented
with a ‘BigSEE Award for promising designers’. In 2020, we staged an exhibition of speculative design in Koper, and participated in a workshop, during which we explored the practice of participatory and socially orientated design.

Our ambition in the coming years is to continue implementing similar projects to broaden our experience of (co-)design actions and research. In doing so, we aim to establish ourselves in the professional design community and use our passion for what we do to spark real change in local communities.

Authors: Tino Duralija, Deja Kofol, Jon Schwarzmann
Supervisors: Barbara Predan and Jure Miklavc
Music: "Follow the Snow to the Sea" by Silence

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