

SYLLABUS

course description

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| Course title | Seminar 2: Transformative Work as a Livelihood Area: Seminar |
| Course code | 96117 |
| Scientific sector | |
| Degree | Master in Eco-Social Design (LM-12) |
| Semester | I |
| Year | 1 st and 2 nd |
| Credits | 2 |
| Modular | No |
| Lecturer | Flora Mammana, e-mail: Flora.Mammana@unibz.it Webpage: https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/design-art/academic-staff/person/45932-flora-mammana |
| Scientific sector of the lecturer | - |
| Teaching language | English |
| Teaching assistant (if any) | - |
| Office hours | 6 |
| Teaching language | English |
| Total lecturing hours | 18 |
| Total hours of self-study and/or other individual educational activities | |
| Attendance | mandatory |
| Prerequisites | - |
| Course page | |

Course description

How to engage as a socially, ecologically and politically engaged designer after graduating? How can designers, who want to question and challenge mainstream economic practices, imagine and create diverse and collaborative structures that are life-sustaining, both for human and more-than-human inhabitants of the planet? How can we create (already during university) social and material conditions to make transformative critical design practices possible for many? How can we avoid the conventional choice between financial stability and the production of meaningful work? And what feminist values and organisational strategies can we adopt to make our socially-engaged practices viable in the long-term?

In the context of the three-day seminar we will immerse ourselves into these seemingly overwhelming questions, which often only arise after graduation, to devise and prepare supportive collaborative structures and desirable pathways already during studies. In order to throw overboard notions of neoliberal work, and let possibilities in the here and now become visible, we will dismantle, rearrange and share to collect stories beyond dominant narratives of both design and work. Through different collective archiving activities we will search for the beautiful myzelliiums that are already everywhere around us, but mostly in the realm of the invisible. Concrete examples of feminist practices of collaboration, transformational work within already existing structures, self-initiated organisations and radical examples outside of usual work imaginaries will be explored in order to become collectively capable of acting on multiple scales and depths in- and outside the mainstream labour market. Participants will have the opportunity to learn which mix of approaches and roles best fits their desires, needs and abilities.

Transformative engagement should not reproduce neoliberal competition and exploitation logics but engage itself in the difficult task of letting these dynamics become cracked by establishing hierarchy-critical forms of work and collaboration. At the same time, structures must be created that do not allow eco-social design to remain a privileged practice that only people with a safe "parachute" can engage with. The seminar locates itself in this in-between space and the controversial dynamics that come with it, taking them as the starting point for a rubbing, tingling and restless negotiation about HOW TO WORK?

Throughout the seminar participants develop a better sense of self-understanding, assess engaged design practices and collaborations from a critical feminist perspective and look at transformative design (wage-)work as a practice of radical interdependence. A digital "*Transformative-Livelihood-Archive*" that collects landscapes of transformative practices and work possibilities will be co-created. The archive serves as a fertile ground to facilitate the transition from studying to generating livelihoods through eco-social design practices as well as a platform to form alliances and synergies between critically engaged designers.

The goal of the seminar is to create through many small exercises and inputs a better understanding of participant's possible and desirable future ecologies of engagement and practice by looking for empowering utopian moments in our present.

Educational objectives

Students will be able to:

- Critically examine (transformative) work, workplaces, and structures from an intersectional feminist perspective deconstructing and discussing the term “work”
- Outline challenges, contradictions and personal perspectives related to transformative design-work
- Recognize diverse possible (new) roles for eco-social designers within more established and radical contexts through the help of the collectively created “*Transformative-Livelihood-Archive*”
- Learn how to work with and maintain the collectively created “*Transformative-Livelihood-Archive*”
- Identify ways of practising design that differ from the currently prevailing individualistic and market-driven structures
- Describe eco-socially engaged practices in an understandable and accessible fashion to diverse publics
- Identify and ideate feminist solidarity practices in collaboration, and mutual support structures for current and future livelihood engagements
- Express how to work and relate to others and where to take their own practice
- Explore strategies of co-organization and bonding against precarious working conditions
- Develop strategies and tactics helpful in the transition from university to the wage labour and transformative practices in general
- Conceptualise personal speculative job descriptions
- Develop an individual way of thinking, leading to critical judgements and self-assessments
- Practise the open sharing of information, offering mutual support and looking at transformative design work as a practice of interdependence

Knowledge will be acquired in the following fields:

- Diverse Economies/ Community Economies
- Feminist understandings of work, collaboration & complicity
- Hierarchy-critical thinking and working
- Feminist transformative thinking
- Speculative dilettantism and experimental format development
- Undisciplined forms of knowing, thinking, and acting
- Anti-capitalist future making
- Creative writing
- Relational thinking practices
- Critical Design Theory

List of topics covered

- Critical feminist understanding of work and diverse work economies
- Redefining (design) career models
- Co-organizing politically engaged transformative practices
- Cooperation and support structures
- Examples of transformational work in different interdisciplinary fields
- Self-understanding and description
- Heterotopic workplaces in the present and future modes of livelihood creation
- Mixed work economies and livelihood ecologies
- Funding opportunities for design/art residencies, associations, self-organised projects and political groups
- Power structures and low-hierarchy approaches
- Mapping needs, ambitions, desires, and values
- Feminist questions and practices in collaboration
- (Application) Techniques for jobs that still have to be created; re-thinking design portfolios
- Job search and description for transformative practices
- Solidarity strategies and unconventional alliances
- Making transformative work tangible to a broader public

Teaching format

Balanced mix of:

- input lectures (providing concepts, concrete tools, and recommendations)
- group discussions and brainstorming (Buzz groups, silent conversations, collective critical reflections, little individual exercises)
- mutual mentoring and coaching sessions
- online interventions by various people/groups who are already generating their livelihood through transformative actions
- group work and small presentations by students
- Health, concentration and group- caring exercises

** The seminar will be significantly shaped-by and adapted-to the common dialogue with the students.**

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

- Ability to recognize diverse fields of action for transformative work and possible ways how to get there
- Acquisition of a set of methods and tactics that can be mobilised and adapted - both alone and together to guide the direction of possible practices after graduation with more agency
- Ability to understand, reflect and communicate one's own position as an eco-social designer
- Capability to identify values, structures and stances that should underpin transformative practics from an intersectional feminist perspective

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Possibility to practise the open sharing of information, offering mutual support and generating a fertile ground for the transition into transformative action already during studies
- Ability to apply more actively, find self-organised structures and transformative workplaces in diverse contexts more easily
- Capability to train one's imagination to discover present and future forms of livelihood creation
- Enablement to empower and support each other

Making judgments

- Actively consider one's needs, desires, and skills to figure out which mix of transformative activities might create a good diverse livelihood economy
- Ability to critically consider and question future workplaces from a feminist perspective and to apply feminist practices in collaboration

Communication skills

- Ability to formulate and communicate concrete self-descriptions or role understandings, as well as to concretize different possible forms of work
- Ability to communicate and publish generated job profiles to diverse publics
- Ability to apply for jobs or create (new) positions/structures creatively and courageously

Learning skills

- Collective management
- Critical self-thinking
- Creativity, motivation, and ability to motivate others through transformative actions
- Cooperation and mutual support
- Interdependence thinking
- Heterotopic present-making

Assessment

Students are required to give a short oral/ audiovisual presentation on one of their created "job searches". These job searches serve as a creative reflective writing exercise and vision proposal to specify and concretize personal/collective possible and preferred areas of eco-social engagement. In addition, this final exercise is intended to help students sharpen their self-understanding as transformational practitioners and get a clearer idea of what intelligent steps to take to get closer to preferred areas of transformative action and to create mutual support structures during university.

Assessment language: English

Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks

For the presentation and the written "job searches" developed by each student, the following criteria apply:

- Degree of self-reflection, self-positioning, self-understanding, and engagement with the specific sector of possible transformative action
- Creativity, imaginative power, and originality of the developed work
- Critical reflection on outcome and topics discussed during the class
- Comprehensibility, transmission, and language of the written and presented work

Required readings

A selection of short texts will be provided and read collectively during the seminar.

Supplementary readings

Bradley, Will; Hannula, Mika and Ricupero, Cristina. Self-Organisation, Counter-Economic Strategies. New York/Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2006.

Chatzidakis, Andreas; Hakim, Jamie; Littler, Jo; Rottenberg, Catherine; Segal, Lynne. The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence. Verso Books, 2020.

Fezer, Jesko; Studio Experimentelles Design; Banz, Claudia. How Do We (Want to) Work (Together) As (Socially Engaged) Designers (Students and Neighbours) (in Neoliberal Times)?: Public Design Support / Öffentliche Gestaltungsberatung 2016-2021. Sternberg Press, 2022.

Jo Freeman. THE TYRANNY of STRUCTURELESSNESS. Berkeley Journal of Sociology. 17, S. 151–164.

Mareis, Claudia; Paim, Nina. Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies, And Perspectives. Valiz, 2021.

Miller, Ethan. Reimagining Livelihoods - Life beyond Economy, Society, and Environment. Minnesota, 2019.

Parker, Martin; Cheney, George; Fournier, Valérie and Land, Valérie eds. The Routledge Companion to Alternative Organization. Oxon: Routledge, 2014.

Weeks, Kathi. The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.