

How can we celebrate risk-taking in co-creative and transdisciplinary design processes for change?

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1. Workshop Organizer/s

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Abstract

Design as catalyst for change entails working with uncertainty, venturing into new ways of knowing and complex transdisciplinary collaborations. This can be provocative, messy, awkward - even frightening, since it involves an element of risk-taking. The risks may concern asserting epistemological positions lower down a normative hierarchy, saying no to a conventionally termed strong financial proposition, or exploring a new visual language. Using metadesign frameworks and tools, this workshop starts from concrete examples of risky moments to explore how design situations and cultures can be more allowing and supportive of risk-taking. Specifically, the workshop uses an approach of 'languaging', manifested through drawing, writing, film-making and embroidery, to probe and reimagine risk-taking. The workshop draws on insights into risk-taking from the Swedish-Japanese

research project Transnational Living Lab for Active Ageing, the development project BOOST - proposals for housing at intersection of migrants, students and ageing population, and Design + Change - the development and implementation of visionary new degree programmes. The facilitators have long experience from setting up safe spaces for risky explorations across sectors, internationally. Workshop participants will leave with a framework and process to explore risk-taking co-creatively, new narratives of risk-taking in change work and a resource of examples of risk-taking.

2. Context of Workshop

Design as catalyst for change entails working with uncertainty, venturing into new ways of knowing and complex transdisciplinary collaborations. This can be provocative, messy, awkward - even frightening, since it involves an element of risk-taking. Everyday change work is far from the heroic imagery that risk-taking perhaps conjures up. Instead, here the risks may concern asserting epistemological positions lower down a normative hierarchy, saying no to a conventionally termed strong financial proposition, or exploring a new visual language. Genuine collaboration requires all partners to stretch 'outside-the-box', simultaneously leaving a comfort zone of knowing and doing. Genuine risk-taking therefore makes us vulnerable; we may lose face, face reputational damage, suffer economic loss, even injury to person or property. We ask: How can we celebrate risk-taking in co-creative processes by identifying, exploring and relanguaging such itchy moments? How can we create a culture of design that is profoundly allowing and supportive of risk-taking?

This research is situated in the field of metadesign, an overarching design, design of change, design to support synergy in transdisciplinary co-creation. (See e.g. Giaccardi 2005; Wood 2007; Tham 2016) It uses metadesign tools that have been developed by the facilitators and used in academia, public and private sectors internationally to support interdependent socio-cultural, environmental and economic sustainability. Specifically, the workshop uses the approach of 'languaging', which can be termed a co-creative relationship between articulating, thinking and acting. (Maturana and Varela 1987; Wood 2004; Tham 2017) As metadesign tool, languaging is translated into activities using different media in order to facilitate different ways of knowing. The workshop is further inspired by constellation work (e.g. Wade 2004), Actor Network Theory (Latour 2005) and Nonviolent Communication (NVC), a framework and methods for realigning relationships (e.g. Rosenberg 2001). The workshop draws on three ongoing projects. Swedish-Japanese Transnational Living Lab for Active Ageing addresses needs of an ageing population through social design. (Vinnova, Sweden and Japan Science & Technology Agency) BOOST generates housing proposals for an ageing population, migrants and students in southern Sweden and is a collaboration between design, business model innovation and technical prototyping. (EU Regional Structural Funds) The new BA programmes Design + Change and Visual Communication + Change focus on educating change agents. Spanning research, development and education, these projects have in common the metadesign frameworks, transdisciplinary co-creation,

complexity, uncertainty, change - and risk-taking. We will share situations from these projects where the need or opportunity for risk-taking has been present, but a conflict has made the risk-taking difficult or impossible. Using a metadesign framework, we have identified conflicts at three interplaying levels: 1) Individual: intrapersonal conflict of loyalty between, for example, personal and professional value systems, and interpersonal conflicts of agendas, practices, procedures, tools and technologies; 2) System: conflicts between institutions' agendas/and the individual's agenda, including regulatory frameworks (such as grading) which stymie or even punish risk-taking. Epistemological conflicts; 3) Paradigm: conflicts between norms, cultures, languages and values. Ontological conflicts.

3. Planned Activities and Expected Outcomes

The workshop unfolds in four stages according to the metadesign trajectory 'from me-to-we and back again'. (Jones and Lundebye 2012) Starting from specific situations of potential risk-taking, we explore and unpack different dynamics at play, co-create and enact new possible responses. Participants will leave with a framework and process to explore risk-taking co-creatively, new narratives of risk-taking in change work and a resource of examples of risk-taking. 1) Creating a shared space: Introduction to theoretical frameworks and practical contexts. Sharing of itchy situations from our research, development and education projects. Agreement of rules of engagement; 2) Linguaging risk-taking: Participants are invited to create postcards of an itchy moment from a design process or collaboration and to share, explore and unpack risk-taking in smaller groups. The groups map and visualise risk-taking at the level of communities and create storyboards/scripts drawing on the synthesis; 3) Enacting risk-taking: The groups exchange scripts. Each group enacts a risk during three minutes. This is filmed. The group as a whole watches the films, explores and unpacks different dynamics at play and proposes alternative ways of thinking, being and doing in the situations, captured in new scripts and storyboards. We make an exploratory re-enactment of one or several of the new scripts; 4) Heart on sleeve: The session ends with a shared informal reflection and discussion. This takes place while individuals language a reflection in the moment through embroidery. (Tham 2017)

4. Intended Audience

We are inviting participants from diverse disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. We are hoping to attract participants of different ages and seniority. The workshop can accommodate 30 participants.

5. Length of Workshop

This workshop is 3 hours long to allow a progression from 'me-to-we and back again' and to explore different ways of linguaging risk-taking. It includes a short break.

6. Space and Equipment Required

We require a space accommodating 30 people sitting in a circle, and also separating into four groups with tables and chairs. We will need a projector and speakers.

7. Potential Outputs

The workshop will generate a visual and verbal resource of risk-taking in co-creative change work, and a refined framework and process for exploring risk-taking in this context. We anticipate that the workshop may open up new conversations, practices and cultures that can further risk-taking in design led co-creative change work.

About the Organizers:

Mathilda Tham's work is focused on paradigmatic change through facilitating transdisciplinary processes of co-creation. She is Professor of Design, Linnaeus University, Sweden and metadesign researcher, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Anette Lundebye's work explores the boundaries between values, perceptions, practices and social trends associated with material culture alongside a strong interest in sustainability and futures. She is Senior lecturer at Regent's University London, a metadesign researcher and a visual artist.

Julia Lockheart's research explores languaging and collaborative writing as a tool for the creation and articulation of new knowledge within design teams. She is Senior Lecturer at Swansea College of Art, UWTSD, Associate Lecturer and metadesign researcher at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Sara Hyltén-Cavallius' research uses co-creative processes with citizens, industry and governance to explore concepts and practices of 'sharing' in design and architecture. She is Senior Lecturer in design, Linnaeus University, Sweden.