Design and future orientation in education

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The hopeful impulse of design anthropology (Anusas & Harkness 2014) as well as the robust future orientation of design (Otto & Smith 2013), makes an interesting impulse also beyond the fields of design and anthropology. Being situated as design researcher in the field of education has stimulated me to reflect upon how the future oriented impulses from design and design anthropology may contribute to current educational discussions and practice that critique schooling. Working between the two fields of museum communication and design has led to a focus on how these institutions may include design and co-design processes to expand their relation to audiences and the public. These institutions have already existing practices and concepts of participation and inclusion with democratic access to education as the overall purpose. The hopeful impulse from design anthropology do provide concepts and perspectives to another thinking of educational activities and participation in these institutios, but the impulse may meanwhile also be mutual. There is a space created by current educational initiatives that may support designers when they go about to re-organise how things are done and bring novel and new connections that change relations and matters (Halse et al 2010). Re-organising and changing relations and matters between museums and society may be complex enough when museums include visitors in endeavors of exhibition making (Smith 2013, Thiel & Jensen 2014). It is an even bigger endeavor when design activities are introduced as ways to include audiences and visitor groups in collaborative processes of changing other practices, such as outreach and communication practices to give a better fit with specific societal groups. In such endeavors, when design processes are used as a method for reflective practice and for institutional transformation, there is a need for design to related to concepts and thinking that matters in these institutions.

Currently are several practical and theoretical initiatives arguing for understanding education as a human social endeavor of transformation that do encompass schools, learning of skills and dispositions, but cannot be reduced to these (Varenne 2009, Säljö 2006). The argument is that understanding education as something that only happens as part of schooling, do leave out a big part of how people create knowledge in their life. This may result in an educational system that fails to support people sufficiently to meet future needs the argument goes. An expanded understanding of learning is posed as an alternative, and is debated as a matter to meet the needs in contemporary society and future challenges in work and life. Anthropology currently brings new voices to these educational discussions, and call for attention towards the role of imaginations and future perspectives as fundamental influences on peoples learning in the present (Ito el al. 2012, Holland et al. 2001). This leads me to the statement I would like to raise in the form of a question for the future of The Research Network for design Anthropology. May the move towards future perspective that is raised by both design anthropology and educational anthropology represent a potential encounter between design and education? May concepts from both side potentially meet and serve to frame participation and involvement in collaborative processes of transformation in broader field of education, such as museums and science centers?

Future-making in education

Some of the new visions and initiatives in education is very much inspired by the pragmatist philosophy that goes back to Dewey, which builds on concepts as 'learning in doing' as a central issue of learning in practice. The distinction between learning as based on achievement of content knowledge and learning as a social and cultural practice has its root here. Some of the models for learning as social practice that are currently discussed, do also include Deweys focus on learning as the capacity to read future results into present activities (Dewey 1916). This has for example led to statements such as 'learning is becoming a practitioner, not learning about practice' (Brown & Duguid 1991, 48). Deweys theories of making and doing does in this way emergently serve as grounding for movements in the field of education, and does remind of the attention in

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design towards how design may frame making and doing as a public endeavor (Clark 2013) in the design disciplines.

Also, another voice that is shared between design and education is the educational anthropology developed by Jean Lave that points out how learning is a matter of social movement and transformation in practice in communities (Lave & Wenger 1991, Lave & Chaiklin 1993). These perspectives have challenged conventional theories of learning and education for decades, and have at the same time challenged the field of participatory design and collaborative design with models of how social processes are changing and continuous processes that design somehow interrupts. Education as well as design, is in this perspective both pervasive and collective activities that goes on continually, together and in public.

While the traditional understandings of learning as related to knowledge content and the actual, we may today consider how design anthropology may contribute to current educational initiatives that are future-oriented, and that currently grapple to understand the role of future orientation for learning. Design anthropology has explored this future orientation of design, and conceptualized it as endeavors of the potential and the possible, and has by this opened our eyes for understanding activities of making things as critical inquiries into emerging worlds and possible alternatives (Kjærsgaard & Boer 2014, Otto & Smith 2013, Smith 2013, Halse et al 2010). Design anthropology has also framed interventions as methods to approach into systems in order to effect an awareness of the values involved, and as method 'to expose habits, norms and standards, or to shift and renegotiate actors/variables" (Bergström et al 2009), and as methods to open up passages (Akama, Pink & Ferguson 2015) or ethnographic spaces (Pink & Morgan 2013) for production of knowledge in and through action (Smith & Otto 2014). In this way it seems relevant to ask if design anthropology may have the capacity to build bridges between emerging approaches in education and design as learning activities versed towards future-making that may be relevant for educational institutions?

Design interventions and futuring

Deweys experiential learning and the understanding of learning as construction

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of meaning based on personal or social experiences may build a common ground for understanding of design interventions – as well as for current visions and approaches to education and learning. For example, do design interventions on one level include engagement with content and material to question, investigate and collaborate to make meaning, but also provide a focus on grounded theoretical and interventionist actions as methodological approach to understand the emergent (Pink & Morgan 2013) on another level. Another example is how design anthropology propose attention towards design intervention as negotiating the distinction between predictive and prescriptive orientation to future making (Gatt & Ingold 2013), which may bring nuances to how future orientation in educational settings may be a matter of positioning. A third example is the placeholder concept for design intervention, which is proposed by design anthropology to focus on how to interventions are tools to prompt reflections about issues in the discursive contexts rather than having the goal to achieve closure (Halse and Boffi 2014). These concepts may be relevant for future orientation in education and work as practical concepts that may support deeper insight in how to scaffold collaborative processes of interest powered and peer-supported approaches in connected learning.

The question then is how to bring these perspectives on the emergent and future-making from design to current educational discussions of making, creating and producing as powerful paths to deeper learning ongoing in the educational field. Educational initiative such as in for example the visions of Connected Learning (Ito et al 2013) or participatory pedagogy (Kumpulainen & Lipponen 2012) do share an interest in learning as abilities to make connections, and to envision the future as part of learning. The Connected Learning movement for example, take departure from how learning is socially embedded, interest driven and oriented towards future opportunities in ways that positions learners as active creators;

'Young learners today have the world at their fingertips in ways that were unimaginable just a generation ago. World- renowned lectures, a symphony of voices and opinions, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities are all a click away. Youth can not only access a wealth of knowledge online, they can also be makers, creators, participants and doers engaged in active and self-directed

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inquiry' (Ito et al. 2013).

Connected learning proposes in this way a framework that is based on actively participation in production-centered, experimental and hands-on learning, and proposes educational institution to follow principles of authentic tasks, experiential and meaningful activities, easy-to-use-tools, low risk, immediate feedback, structured access to resources and mastery of specialist language as main principles (ibid).

From a design perspective we could say that all of these principles are about handling the emergent so familiar for design processes, but the framework of Connected learning provides little conceptual framework to support these future-making aspects. Also, while Connected Learning is a future oriented learning initiative, there is little conception for the suspension of reality that is so needed to be able to move from the actual to the potential (Kjærsgaard 2011, Kjærgaard & Boer 2014) in future-making. The endeavors of design anthropology to bring together speculative and mundane practices of future making, and to combine the critical and imaginative potentials of anthropology with material explorations (Kjærgaard & Boer 2014) do in this way propose a conceptual framework that may serve for exploring the future perspective of learning in current educational discussions.

The design anthropological encounter as a mutual experience of becoming knowledgeable and in possession of agency (Binder et al. 2011) does in this way also create a learning space that may serve current educational initiatives in their search for concepts and methods to handle the future-orientation that education need to take as a framework for learning. For educational institutions in the cultural heritage field, such as museums and science centers, this encounter may be a way to explore how the museum content knowledge so dominant in the educational thinking of these institutions, may become part of the knowledgeable and agentic self outside of these institutions.

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