

Updating Values. Perspectives on Design Education

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An Entropy-Driven Scenario for Future Design Education

 **Valentina Frosini,
Veronica De Salvo,
Lorenzo Gerbi**

A New Paradigm

In a *Domus* article published in 1998, John Thackara claimed that design would lead by entropy in the future, and he wondered how to avoid a similar dystopian scenario. As designers, we are aware of how wicked problems are really hard to face and how complexity has increased in these past decades: transdisciplinary skills are therefore increasingly required. Furthermore, we can only achieve incremental improvements to the situation, because a wicked problem typically has no definitive solution (Rittel, Webber 1973, in Erlhoff, 2008): a new mindset is therefore required, one that is capable of overcoming our traditional one (Morin, 2015), in order to face and manage the complexity. In this short paper, we propose a practice-oriented pilot project for design transdisciplinary education that overturns the Thackara proposal: we suggest assuming entropy as a new paradigm for design education.

Future Scenarios

In order to face complexity, design education should assume entropy as paradigm, working on a transdisciplinary process to overcome the disciplinary barriers. In this framework, since the very beginning of their training, students, as future designers, should have to tackle uncertainty and disorientation. The pilot project we suggest should see provocation as its strategy, causing a kind of shock in the students. Starting from a challenge theme, students should be stimulated to imagine and build utopian or dystopian future scenarios through the Fictional-World Building method.¹

The whole course should stimulate in the students the motivational nature of the educational choice and develop and

strengthen possibility thinking. The teaching team should be multidisciplinary (a designer, an anthropologist, a neuroscientist, a physicist, an urban planner, and a philosopher), in order to take into account every aspect of the phenomena, thus overcoming only the designer's point of view. The idea is to make students face the implications, promises, and pitfalls of today's complexity from the very beginning of their training, to generate (following an initial phase of natural disorientation) a critical reflection on the urgency of design intervention, paying close attention to the responsibilities vis-à-vis the role of the designer (Drazin, in Gunn et al., 2013): meaning that, as designers, we have to pay attention to the consequences of our actions and always keep our responsibility in mind.

The Pilot Project Framework

The pilot project approach will be reflective-interpretative and practice-oriented (Saikaly, 2003, p. 6), based on the balance between scientific rigour and design practice (fig. 1). The strategy should take place through the construction of an exploratory case-study in a chosen university, which will become the research analysis unit. The design practice method will be the Fictional-World Building method: other methods (e.g. hard science methods) could be selected and adopted depending on the individual case studies and challenges selected.

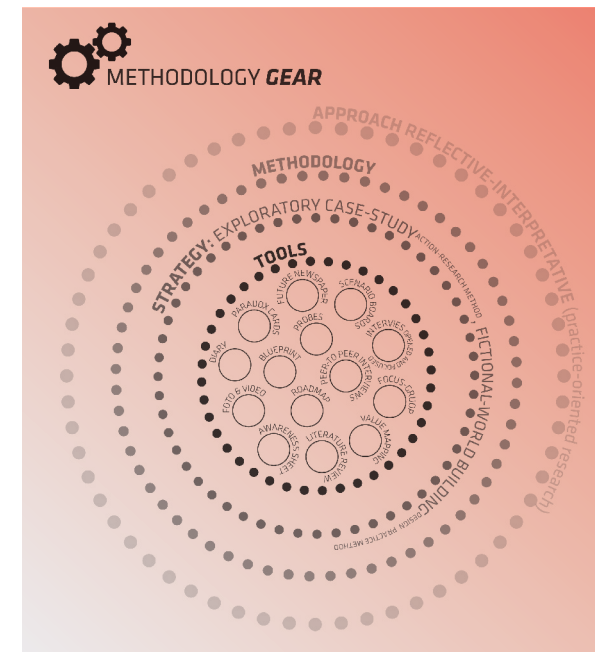


Figure 1.
The methodology
of the pilot-project.
Source: Valentina
Frosini

¹ <https://www.baitanlaboratories.org/>

open-ended tool, capable of driving the improvement of this first pilot project (fig. 3). As an exploratory case-study, indeed, the project will be the prelude to new research projects that will figure out new and best frameworks. As forerunners of future scenarios, students, together with their teachers, are able to build new and open-ended educational projects.

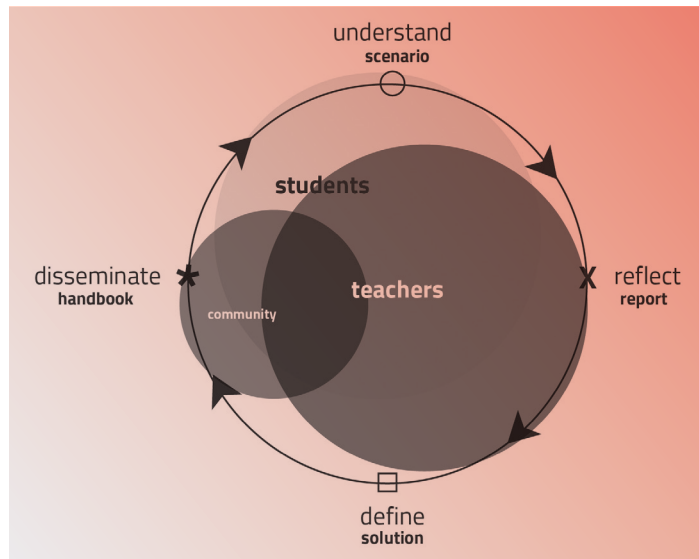


Figure 3.
The improving
education framework.
Source: Valentina
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