

Conversation: Design & Posthumanism Network

In this panel, members of the Design & Posthumanism network will present and discuss design research work that has taken place recently. This includes activities such as mineral meditation walks, hypnosis to get rid of meat addiction, subjectification of a river, and the un/making of pollination.

The Design & Posthumanism Network (www.designandposthumanism.org) engages with posthumanism in design practice, education and research. We are designers and scholars, based in Sweden or its neighbouring regions. Common for all involved is the want to nourish curiosity and belief regarding the need for designers to pay better attention to non-human earthlings like other animals, plants, and everything inbetween and beyond. Together we want to explore how design practice, education and research can grow and thrive in contact with posthumanism – and how designerly and artistic skills, methods and approaches at the same time can contribute to posthumanism.

You are invited to listen in and contribute with your own questions and reflections such as: How can designers and design researchers act in a time of planetary challenges? Is there a problem with humancentred design? What networks are involved in design?

The projects that will be presented are:

Un/making Pollination - Un/Making Studio (Kristina Lindström and Åsa Ståhl) + Li Jönsson: Reports, observations, predictions and speculation tell us stories about a limited future. In this design research project we have engaged in one particular prediction of a thin future: the alarming loss of pollinators (IPBES 2019) and along with that many of our present times fruits, vegetables, berries and more that we take for granted today. Through a series of events we have explored how to sense, think, and perhaps even dream this issue into human sight using design. These events should clearly not be considered a design solution to a solvable problem, but rather as a way of exploring how things could be otherwise, or how certain previous relations perhaps has to be unmade.

How do these (often) thin predictions and speculations of the future influence the way we act in the present and the here and now? How do they influence how we relate to, prepare for, and intervene into the future? And in what way might design/ers work and intervene into such concerning issues?

Mineral Meditation Walks - Petra Lilja: The paradigm of human exceptionalism has set in motion a machinery of global effects of which design, by adding to mass-production and consumption, can be argued to be one principal cog.

In my work, based on material design approaches as well as curatorial strategies, I explore ways to critically examine the role of the designer and the connections between design and global extractivism. Feminist theory and posthumanism has been inspirational in the Mineral Meditation Walks, where the aim is to examine the common ground between human and lithic bodies, collapsing the boundaries between human and nature, living and nonliving. Documentation from a walk on a geologically diverse shoreline in Denmark will be shared. In this collaboration, the minerals of the pebble stones are brought to the foreground, guiding us through deep time and connecting us to spatially distant locations. Mineral Meditation Walk is a first step in exploring ways to reimagining our relation to the world, as situated and entangled.

How can designers understand materials beyond resources transformed into products? Can we find common ground between ourselves as designer humans and other-than-humans like for example rocks, stones and minerals?

Undesigning Meat-Eating Desires - Erik Sandelin: Do you want to stop eating other animals but find it hard to quit? Eating the flesh of others can be addictive. I'm offering free hypnosis sessions, in Swedish or English, that will guide you towards less harmful eating habits.

How can designers relate to other animals in design? Let's try following an affirmative trajectory of "not": not consuming them, not wearing them, not using them. What might such gracious, ahuman, design practices be like?

Shimmer and Entanglements in the River Basin of Viskan - Thomas Laurien & Theo Ågren: Subjectifying a river makes new kinds of conversations between human beings and the more-than-human possible.

Can these conversations - partly scientific, partly speculative - lead to more sustainable and regenerative relations between human and more-than-human stakeholders in a precarious

region? How does an articulated posthumanist perspective and ambition challenge and shape situated design/artistic practice?

Confirmed catalysts:

Kristina Lindström, senior lecturer, Malmö University

Li Jönsson, associate senior lecturer, Malmö University

Åsa Ståhl, senior lecturer, Linnaeus University

Thomas Laurien, senior lecturer, HDK-Valand, University of Gothenburg

Erik Sandelin, PhD student, Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design & KTH Royal Institute of Technology

Petra Lilja, PhD student, University of Arts, Crafts and Design (Konstfack) & Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Stockholm.