

Building (a collective thing) Organising Discourse platform project description by Jonatan Lennman 2015-12-10

ABSTRACT

How can we claim our rights to access and understand the things and spaces around us? How can we deal with the complex structures that control them? Can we make it more simple together? Could it be more like cooking?

'Building (a collective thing)' is a series of workshops exploring the creation of temporary collectives or collaborations around design related issues. The verb "Building" in the title is understood as a collective process that creates both physical and social structures. By using that word i also claim that working together hands-on is a good way to meet (at least very interesting) and everyone should do it. The process of making with materials can bring up issues for discussion as well as it can allow conversation to take other forms than just words.

BACKGROUND

'The smallest unit for analysis is the relation'. That quote from Donna Haraway's 'Cyborg manifesto', states something important for discourse on gender, technology, or other analytical categories: seeing relations as "units" that can be analysed improves our understanding of a system. For me it means that design is not about people or artifacts, its about understanding how artifacts and people affect each other, in intricate networks, and knowing and testing ways to tamper with this.

AIM

The project aims to explore and experiment with ways of creating temporary collectives, to start exploring the questions formulated in the project, and (as much as is possible in the duration of the course, and after the course is ended) to explore what this collaborative, discursive, possibly interdisciplinary practice means as way of working for myself as a freelance designer and for my collaborators.

STRUCTURE

The project consists of a series of workshops, each dedicated to a question and topic defined by me, each including both talk and hands on work. The general goal is to explore and to experiment with structures and methods for creating a (temporary) collective in order to discuss and act on an issue in relation to design.

Every workshop starts with an introduction and a set of instructions that are to be followed troughout, and ends with a debriefing discussion. The instructions are a sort of design that aims to delimit the work, opening or closing possibilities, overcoming or creating hierarchies. They can be altered from one session to another in order to experiment with the structure or to improve the quality of the session. I will try out different ways of structuring depending on the work experience of the collaborators.

The project should involve people with varying design knowledge, but for the collaborations to work i will plan ahead to make sure that we are engaged in the same issues, or at least that the common goal is clear to everyone. This applies to 'civilians' as well as those involved in the fields of design, crafts, architecture, art. I will prepare my collaborators as much as possible by talking to them ahead of the workshop, by describing the project and the topics in the invitation and by giving an introduction on the day of the session.

WORK

- Writing the invitations, which also means defining the topic and structure for each workshop.
- Inviting participants for each workshop.
- Preparing the work space, materials and tools if it is possible.
- Managing the workshop session (hosting, sometimes cooking, cleaning, documentation, caring for social relations and safe work methods)
- Collecting documentation and feedback

TIMEPLAN

- #1 'Workshop för stugan', collective furniture making, June 2015
- #2 'Bring your needs', 4 designers in my studio, November 2015
- #3 Work in progress, Possibly C/O 'Blå huset' in Tensta, January 2016

DOCUMENTATION & EVALUATION

The project will be continuously evauated and it will change throughout with the help of the feedback i get from my collaborators. I will gather photos and notes after each session and present in a report reflecting on the first three sessions end of January.

BIOGRAPHY

Jonatan Lennman is a product designer BA, educated at Beckmans College of Design. Further studies in art, architecture and gender at KTH and Konstfack, in addition to carpentry and D.I.Y projects inform his current practice which explores non-hierarchical, collaborative and self-reflective ways of doing design. He is also one of the co-organisers of recurring meetings of interdisciplinary exchange with art, architecture and other fields.

INVITATION TO **Building (a collective thing) #2**

(A project by Jonatan Lennman for the Konstfack independent postgraduate course 'Organising Discourse')

Welcome to a workshop around a question of **design and empowerment: Can we help each other out right here? And what is real empowerment in relation to design?** on Saturday 28th of November, 2015.

SETTING

We meet in my studio in Elektravägen 5 in Västberga industriområde, a 15 min walk from Telefonplan.

Materials and tools present are different sized wood and boards, electrical saws, drills, hammer, foam rubber, adhesives, a small amount of textile, tape, pencils, a few rocks, paint, clamps, rubber bands etc.

INSTRUCTIONS

The premise of this workshop is the collaboration of individuals around a question for discussion. In order to maintain a functioning group, personal responsibilities are also assigned.

All

Define a need you have in terms of objects or spatial functions. It can be as simple as the need of a specific piece of furniture for your home. Bring your thought on Saturday.

Personal

Your task is to be one of the following:

Facilitator (Jonatan)
Timekeeper
Power intervener
Vibes-watcher
Recorder

The personal tasks are important for the care of the group.

SCHEDULE

Saturday 28th of November, 13.00-17.00

13.00 Introduction with coffee, look around the space

13.40 Group work

17.00 Optional feedback discussion & dinner cooked by Jonatan

PROJECT

The verb "Building" is here understood in a wide sense, meaning actions that create both physical and social things or structures. The claim is that working together hands on is a good way to meet. Like cooking. Physical interaction with chosen materials or the context can bring up issues for discussion, and it allows the conversation to take other forms than just words. Every workshop starts with an introduction and a set of instructions that are to be followed throughout, and ends with a debriefing discussion. The instructions are a sort of design that aims to delimit the work, opening or closing possibilities, overcoming or creating hierarchies. The goal is to explore ways of working with design related issues collectively.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

How should we deal with the complex (?) networks and cycles of need, demand, production, consumption and its effects on environment and workers conditions, and up close on ourselves as passive consumers with too little time or knowledge to do anything else than solve our needs with IKEA&co. How should we deal with IKEA&co? They HAVE really nice

designs sometimes. Should we strive to change it from within, boycott or attack? How should we take the power over design in our lives? How to claim our rights to tamper with and understand the things and spaces around us? Do we hack the available designs? Is this even possible or just another type of consumption identity? Should we do many different things at once? What exactly is the empowerment in building it yourself? Is the description here even real? Can we make it more simple together?

The tasks that are distributed are based on methods for feminist decisionmaking. Since it is a small group and a short session it might be difficult to apply them fully, lets not stress about it if this is the case.

The facilitator aids the group in defining decisions that need to be made, helps them through the stages of reaching an agreement, keeps the meeting moving, focuses discussion to the point at hand; makes sure everyone has the opportunity to participate. Facilitators help to direct the process of the meeting, not its content. They never make decisions for the group.

A vibes-watcher makes sure everyone is comfortable and safe, not hungry, that the air is good, decides when it is time for a break.

A power intervener is attentive to the group dynamics and intervenes and redirects power when there are imbalances in participation, one collaborator is dominating the meeting or in instances of sexism or bullying.

A recorder takes notes on the meeting, especially of decisions made and means of implementation. Also documents the meeting with photos.

A time-keeper solves schedule issues and keeps things going on schedule so that each agenda item can be covered in the time allotted for it, preferably through discrete backwards counting (i.e. "15 mins left until the break")

Even though individuals take on these roles, all participants in a meeting should be aware of and involved in the issues, process, and feelings of the group, and should share their individual expertise in helping the group run smoothly and reach a decision.

The definitions are an adaptation of two sources: <http://www.nonviolencetraining.org/Training/facilitation.htm#top>, <http://ickevald.net/perherngren/feministiskamotesfunktioner.htm>