OnCreate

Course Description

Visual Stories from Future Cities

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Project Consortium: University of Applied Sciences Magdeburg-Stendal (Germany); Aalborg University (Denmark); Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Finland); University of Lincoln (United Kingdom); University of Ljubljana (Slovenia); Potsdam University of Applied Sciences (Germany); Tampere University of Applied Sciences (Finland); University of Tampere (Finland); YMCA University of Applied Sciences (Germany)

Visual Stories from Future Cities

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Abstract

»Visual Stories from Future Cities« is an interdisciplinary course with a focus on future sciences and design. The topic of the course is compatible to most disciplines. Even the course took place in presence, it is compatible to an online teaching- and learning environment. Due to the course topic, suggested collaboration modes are parallel assignments and asynchronous collaboration. »Competence Sheets« as a method for teambuilding were proved successfully. Considerations on course positioning in the curriculum of the study programme, on dealing with heterogeneous students' skills and experiences in relevant editing software, on the time schedule as well as on dealing with copyrighted material for prototypes, are summarised in the experience report.

Course Description

Course announcement

How will we live and work in 2030? What does the city of the future looks like and what will we do the whole blessed day? Are there professions like the „Robot Counselor", the „Localizer" and the „Digital Currency Advisor"— and what is behind it?
In this interdisciplinary course, various forecasts, visions, and future scenarios will be researched, discussed, expanded and / or reassembled, create—and transfer into visual stories. A close interplay of theory and practice is focused; and the courage to develop visions and to critically examine them from different perspectives, is encouraged.

Methodological-didactic approach

The course follows the guiding principles of research-oriented learning and teaching. Students will work out specific sub-questions of current research and discuss different research approaches. They will develop and

visualise different scenarios on how working and living in the city of the future will be. Students will practice to build up future scenarios based on a systematically scenario development process.

Firstly (week 1–4), an introduction into different future scenarios and initiatives is given by the teachers and the invited experts from various disciplines. National approaches and case studies are analysed and compared, e.g. http://www.nationale-plattform-zukunftsstadt.de from the Federal Gouvernment of Germany or the german initiative https://www.d2030.de. Both the „6 Drivers of Change“ and the „Future Work Skills of 2020“ (http://www.iftf.org/futureworkskills/), which are already being used more frequently, are topics of discussion. Interesting film documentaries like the three-part ARTE contribution „Cities of the future“ (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGwvoxj_xYU) can be used as accompanying material (https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=cities+of+the+future+film).
The lectures are supplemented by students’ research outputs and summarized / systematized as a basis for further work within a weekend seminar.

Secondly (week 5–10), based on the insights (Research + Inspiration Phase), future scenarios will be developed. First of all, creative methods and story writing exercises are used to specify the influencing factors and the effects, that should be described by this scenario. Various inputs in the area of storytelling and presentation techniques accompany this phase (dramaturgical approaches; time-based storytelling; visualization: which technique for which statement? etc.). Each working group draws up an implementation plan with the help of the lecturers. An introduction to the processes with low-prototype solutions especially supports the non-design students in the development of their visualizations (storyline, story plot, implementation). Teachers play an advisory and supervising role now. In addition, regular exchange peer reviews of the student groups are integrated to the course meetings.

Thirdly (week 11–13), students get to know and practise the concepts and methods of the discipline »future research / future studies. Especially

training of the method »Scenario Analysis« is in focus. They get to know this method and apply it to a specific topic. The question for this scenario exercise is quite concrete: What future scenarios are plausible for [name of your university] in 2030?

Finally (week 14), the course process and the results are presented by the students. After the university public presentation, the evaluation of the course takes place in the circle of course participants.

Learning outcomes and examination
Design Skills: the formation of variants (ideation); integration of findings from the research phase into the ideation phase (dealing with influencing factors and plausibility); quality in storytelling (dealing with complexity and reduction of content, dramaturgy, increase of competence in the implementation phase);
Future Studies Skills: intensity in practise to develop a new focus; quality of execution of the „Scenario Analysis“ method;
Presentation Skills: preparation of the presentation (content, structure, execution quality); rhetoric

Collaboration Mode

The course is suitable for various modes of co-operation. However, not all variants are recommended. It is best to work with **parallel assignments** (= student groups from different universities work on the same assignment). The presentation slots can be used together to present and reflect the (process) results. The reason why no more intensive co-operation (within a 4 ECTS workload course) is proposed is due to the choice of the course subject. The topic (future research / scenario development / visualisation of possible futures) is interdisciplinary and socially relevant. However, national developments and initiatives are of great importance because they are easier to link to the population living there.
It is advisable to study local and regional initiatives in particular—and to form plausible scenarions for the contexts and places in which students are familiar with. This prevents the creation of implausible scenarios.

One way to strengthen interdisciplinary co-operation would be to use **asynchronous collaboration** (= using asynchronous communication tools

like forums, shared documents, shared folders. A particular interesting form of asynchronous collaboration are Design Thinking processes where each partner builds on the existing work of the other partner). One suggestion for collaboration is, that the first course concentrates on creating written scenarios. The second course would build on these texts and translate them into visual stories. A duration of two semesters would make sense for this project.

Duration, Intensity & ECTS

Duration & Intensity

Winterterm: 2015—2016; weekly on Fridays 10:00 am to 13:00 pm +
2 x all-day seminar (Friday & Saturday; 9:00 am to 18:00 pm); 14 weeks
Winterterm: 2016—2017; weekly on Mondays 10:00 am to 13:00 pm +
2x all-day seminar (Friday & Saturday; 9:00 am to 18:00 pm); 14 weeks

ECTS:

4 ECTS (120 hours workload, of which 74 hours are presence time)

Lecturers:

Prof. Dr. Tobias Schröder; Research Professor for »Sustainable Urban Development Strategies«, Institute of Applied Sciences—Urban Futures; University of Applied Sciences Potsdam; https://www.en.fh-potsdam.de/researching/institute-of-applied-sciences-urban-futures/
Prof. Constanze Langer, Professor for »Visual Interface Design«, Department of Design; University of Applied Sciences Potsdam; https://idl.fh-potsdam.de; https://www.fh-potsdam.de/studieren/fachbereiche/design/

Guest Speakers:

Dr. Manjana Milkoreit, Senior Sustainability Fellow, Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability; Arizona State University; https://sustainability.asu.edu/people/persbio.php?pid=15114
Beate Schulz-Montag, Consultant for Science, Technology and Environmental Politics, Qualitative and Multi-method Research, Information Technology and Politics; Z_punkt GmbH The Foresight Company, Berlin; http://foresightlab.de, http://www.z-punkt.de/en/

Platforms

Incom.org (Communication Plattform), Course Workspace: https://incom.org/workspace/6254; Google Docs (group work for writing tasks); Dropbox (sharing documents)

Curriculum

Used „onCreate Methods“: Teambuilding: »Competence Sheet«
Other design methods used: urban photo safari; film analysis; scenario writing; scenario analysis; user stories and user scenarios; peer review

Week	Topic of the unit	Phase within the Creative Process / within the Course
01	Kick-Off	Introduction and teambuilding: »Competence Sheet«
02	Research	future research / future studies: concepts and methods, areas of application, case studies
03	Research	Topic »Development of Cities«, influencing factors
04	Presentation & Synthesis	Presentation, summary and systematization of the findings from the research phase
05	Ideation	Scenario Writing / Scripting
06	Ideation	Scenario Writing / Scripting, Iteration
07	Ideation	Design Techniques
08	Ideation	Create films: production
09	Prototype	Create films: production, Iteration
10	Presentation	Presentation of scenario films
11	Ideation	Scenario Development: introduction »Scenario Development Processes«
12	Prototype	Scenario Development: practice method »Scenario Analysis«
13	Prototype	Scenario Development: visualise scenarios
14	Presentation & Evaluation	Presentation of design process and results; evaluation of the course, the results and reflection of the increase in expertise

Experience Report

Topic of the course

The topic (future research / scenario development / visualisation of possible futures) is interdisciplinary and socially relevant. Knowledge in Future Studies and Graphic / Motion Design of the lecturers is essential to the quality of the course. The available time is very tight for the processing of all tasks and process steps. The course should be offered as a main course in the bachelor programme or in the master programme; the topic

is not recommended for the basic course programme.

Creative process within the course

The formation of variants (ideation), the integration of findings from the research phase into the ideation phase (dealing with influencing factors and plausibility) and to build up quality in storytelling (dealing with complexity and reduction of content, dramaturgy, increase of competence in the implementation phase) needs time. If some skills and experience in relevant editing software already exists it is easier to concentrate on the content. For students with low-level experience on editing software should be encouraged to create 2d-stills, stop-motion-videos or images of scenarios they build up in a low-level-prototype manner (like working with Plasticine, LEGO, toys, or image stock material). Prepared examples of low-level-prototypes inspire students more than verbal explanations / instructions.

Reflection on course results

In this course curriculum, the documentation is not taken into account (process steps; reports on the underlying assumptions and influencing variables of the scenarios; web presentation and description of the produced visual stories). The final material should be summarized and documented better, which also requires additional time to the course schedule.

One student created a very good film about senior and assisted living. The story was narrated with photographs and spoken word and it was deposited with contextsensitive tones and music. However, since the production time was very limited, she used exclusively copyrighted material / stock material. This film can not be shown for copyright reasons; even if is brilliant. This is another reason to extend the course. Thus, the material used could be created beforehand by the students themselves.

Teambuilding: »Competence Sheets«

The Competence Sheets worked quite well; especially for those students who did not knew each other before. But also for themselves it was quite a good exercise to reflect on those competences they wanted to present and offer for help to others.