

Summary

2. Discussion in Los Angeles, 17 -19 October 2019

The iF Design Foundation's second discussion round was undertaken in cooperation with the ArtCenter College of Design. Thirty participants from the US and Europe met in Pasadena, California. As with the first discussion, the greatest value was placed on having the most diverse range of experts present for the exchange. Guests included women and men from various design colleges, graduates, senior and junior designers, design managers (Amazon, Google, IBM ...) and entrepreneurs. The discussions centred around significantly different topics than those at the first discussion round in Gmund in Germany. Questions regarding the structure and organisation of design training were at the forefront in California.

This can be understood as a reflection of the education system in the US where university education is viewed as a private matter rather than a collective duty of society. As a consequence, the best qualifications at universities are mainly coupled with high study costs. Access to a design degree for many social groups is therefore structurally impeded. The participants developed an alternative organisational form for design colleges to guarantee that precisely these individuals can find their way to the design colleges that seek and need their talents. These suggestions included considering ways to use the digitalisation of education as a potential for diversification.

A further important point not discussed in much detail in Germany was the impetus from big data and artificial intelligence (AI). It was clear to everyone present that these innovations have already transformed and would continue to transform the practice of design drastically. A broad discussion took place about the ethical implications of this development. Different positions were voiced during the exchange regarding the consequences of this for design practice. While critics of the use of AI felt sceptical about its transfer to design colleges, advocates argued for far-reaching alignment of design practice on the status quo in the digital economy.

The broad spectrum of the positions gives reason to hope for a further enrichment of the debate in the third discussion round in Kyoto from the 28 – 30 November 2019. The iF Foundation will then be the guest of Kyoto Institute of Technology (KIT).