Project title: Design thinking for everyone anytime everywhere

Discipline: Design

Key words: Design thinking, collaboration, cross-sectional analysis

Supervisory team: Nicole Lotz, Derek Jones

URL for lead supervisor’s OU profile: http://www.open.ac.uk/research/people/ns4678

Project Highlights:
• to advance approaches in using design thinking across sectors and sections of society
• to develop cross-sectional research and analysis techniques in design that further our understanding of collaborative ideation
• to improve the engagement of all sections of society in relevant collaborative design processes

Overview:
Design thinking has been adopted as an approach to tackling complex problems and innovation in different sectors ranging from academia to business and governmental to non-governmental organisations. Some argue design thinking may be a basic cognitive skill, such as reading, writing and arithmetic (Sing, Lotz, Sanders, 2018). Others have used design thinking to further creativity in teams to tackle complex problems in different sectors, such as health, commerce or finance (Brown, 2009; Dorst, 2015). There has also been criticism of Design Thinking or ‘design as everything type of skill’ – (e.g. Kimbell 2011). We need to gain a better understanding how Design Thinking can facilitate collaborative design processes across sections and sectors. This research seeks to investigate: How might we engage everyone, ranging from the very young to the very old and across other sections such as gender, race and socio-economic background, in tackling complex and relevant problems together using Design Thinking?

Methodology:
A mixed methods approach to empirical work is envisaged and will involve the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. The important contribution of this work will be the cross-sectional analytical stance, aiming at gaining a deeper understanding of how different intersections impact on design thinking and collaborative design.

Further reading:
Christensen, Ball and Halskov ‘Analysing Design Thinking’; Dorst ‘Frame Innovation’; Cross ‘Design Thiking’; Brown ‘Change by Design’ Lotz and Sharp ‘The influence of cognitive style, design setting and cultural background on sketch-based ideation by novice interaction designers.’

Further details:
Students should have a strong background in design and enthusiasm for collaborative design processes. Experience of qualitative and quantitative research is essential and a particular sensitivity for working with people from diverse backgrounds in needed. The student will join a well-established team researching design thinking at the Open University.

Please contact Nicole Lotz - Nicole.Lotz@open.ac.uk for further information.

Applications should include:
• A 1000 word cover letter outlining why the project is of interest to you and how your skills match those required
• an academic CV containing contact details of three academic references
• Open University application form
• Applicants will need to demonstrate good competence in the English language. International students need an overall IELTS score of 6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any of the four categories of reading writing, speaking and listening.

Applications should be sent to STEM-EI-PhD@open.ac.uk by 28.02.20