CONVIVIAL TOOLS

12–13 October 2018

A programme of talks, debates and workshops led by participants including Ruth Catlow, Sara Gold, Joseph Grima, Adam Greenfield, Dougald Hine, Natalie Kane, Torange Khonsari, Justin McGuirk, Nils Norman, Nina Power, Joseph Rykwert, Vera Sacchetti, Eleanor Saitta, Jana Scholze, Ben Terrett, John Thackara, Stacco Troncoso, Sumitra Upham, Ann Marie Utratel and Ben Vickers.

Ivan Ilich was an Austrian social philosopher, polymath and priest and a perceptive critic of industrialised society, which he saw as forcing people into 'compulsory consumption'. In recent years, the thinking of Illich has come back into currency. In his book *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), Illich argued that the nature of modern tools, from machines to schools, had the effect of making people dependent and undermined their own natural abilities. What he called 'convivial tools' were those that encouraged people to think for themselves and be more socially engaged.

Such ideas are timely in an age when tools are becoming more and more powerful. Our machines increasingly do much of our thinking and remembering for us, and the companies that provide them have created radical monopolies. At the same time, there is a growing interest in alternative political and economic systems that can better serve the interests of a fair society and a planet under ecological strain. The idea of the commons – co-produced and self-managed wealth – can help reframe our understanding of cities, the digital realm and natural resources.

Illich himself was an influence on the commons movements. In an era when rampant privatisation makes many nostalgic for the days of a robust welfare state, the commons seems to offer one way out of the deadlock between private interests and public responsibility. Cooperative movements – in the worlds of technology, urbanism and agriculture – suggest that an alternative future could be made possible through co-creation and shared responsibility.

The design profession is questioning the kind of society it is helping to create. Long defined by the consumerist model that Illich repudiated, designers are increasingly seeking to produce different kinds of tools and new forms of social relations. As we become ever more environmentally conscious, the idea that the designer's role is to create novelties for new markets has become less acceptable. This programme, which brings together designers, technologists, philosophers and artists, explores whether they can help to create what Illich would call a convivial society.

Friday 12 October

Commonspoly
**Bauhaus & Ulm
the Design Museum
11.00–13.00**
Commonspoly is a hack and a critique of the game Monopoly. Players aim first to re-municipalise private goods and then turn them into a Commons – you'll learn why this is the best strategy while playing the game. Rather than compete against each other, players must overcome their conditioning and 'rational, self-interest' to instead maximise cooperative behaviours and create a commons-oriented locality. Games leaders: Stacco Troncoso, Ann Marie Utratel and Ruth Catlow.

A Convivial Table
**Walmer Yard
19.00–21.00**
'Tables: A School of Expanded Formats' is a series of six curated dinners led by Jana Scholze for the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial – A School of Schools. It intends to test the alternative curatorial format of a dinner as tool for teaching and learning.

A Convivial Table, the 2nd dinner in the series, has been conceived in conjunction with the Design Museum's Convivial Tools symposium. The dinner brings together a group of 20 curators, designers and thinkers to reflect on Illich's concept of conviviality in a social setting. By taking part in a series of rituals and shared experiences, participants will be encouraged to question conventional forms of participation and interaction and stimulate focused discussions around the meaning of a convivial society.

Saturday 13 October

Convivial Tools symposium
**Bakala Auditorium
the Design Museum
11.00–17.00**
Leading designers, curators, technologists and theorists discuss the legacy of Ivan Illich's concept of conviviality.

Welcome
**11.00–11.15
Sumitra Upham and
Justin McGuirk**

What are Convivial Tools?
**11.15–12.15
Chair: Justin McGuirk
Adam Greenfield, Nina Power
and John Thackara**
Illich argued that modern society was hardwired to turn us into 'addict-consumers', at the expense of our own natural abilities. Illich believed that we need to master our tools, lest they master us. He also felt that our tools should encourage participation, trust and sociability:

Convivial tools are those which give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision. Industrial tools deny this possibility to those who use them, and they allow their designers to determine the meaning and expectations of others.

This first session will discuss the criteria for a convivial society in today's networked age, and the tools needed to shape it.

Reflection 1
**Dougald Hine
12.15–12.35**

Schooling or Deschooling?
**12.35–13.35
Chair: Joseph Grima
Torange Khonsari, Nils Norman
and Vera Sacchetti**
The book that brought Illich to public attention was *Deschooling Society* (1971), a radical critique of the nature of institutionalised education in western society.

This session explores the legacy of Illich's thinking around education. Drawing on current models of alternative learning, speakers will explore the implications of deschooling and the meaning of convivial education.

Lunch
13.35–14.30

Emergent Cooperativisim
**14.30–15.30
Chair: Ben Vickers
Sarah T Gold, Eleanor Saitta
and Ben Terrett**
How are new technologies helping to create a more cooperative and convivial society? What limits do we need to place on digital tools in order to prevent them from overshadowing and undermining human ability?

In this session, Illich's concept of conviviality will be used as a framework for a discussion on the potential of an open, networked society and how the co-operatively owned Internet is becoming a reality. The group will reflect on emerging tools and technologies enabling greater social production, new forms of citizen participation and digital commons.

Reflection 2
**Joseph Rykwert
15.30–16.00**

The Open Session
16.00–17.00
This final session is an opportunity for any of the participants, and anyone in the audience, to reflect on the day's proceedings and what the learnings might be.

Participant biographies

Ruth Catlow is an artist and curator, co-founder and co-director of Furtherfield, Ruth Catlow is a recovering web-utopian and has worked since the mid-90s with network practices in arts, technology and social change.

Sarah T Gold is a leading expert in emerging issues and trends in privacy, security and technology. She founded IF in 2015 and has a well-established reputation for her commitment to changing the way personal data is managed. Sarah's won a range of awards, including Forbes 30 Under 30 in 2016, and is a practitioner for the Research Institute in the Science of Cyber Security and a Fellow of the RSA.

Joseph Grima is an architect, curator and writer. He is Creative Director of Design Academy Eindhoven; Artistic Director of Matera European Capital of Culture 2019, and Founder and partner at Space Caviar.

Adam Greenfield is a London-based writer and urbanist. His most recent book, *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life*, was published by Verso in 2017.

Dougald Hine is a writer, thinker and teacher who has been at least partly responsible for the creation of organisations including the Dark Mountain Project, School of Everything, Spacemakers and a school called HOME. In 2006, he travelled to Cuernavaca to participate in a gathering to mark the fifth anniversary of the death of Ivan Illich. There he met Illich's friends and co-conspirators, whose company has been a recurring source of insight and fellowship in the years since.

Natalie Kane is Curator of Digital Design at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London where she is responsible for the care, research, display and collection of digital design in the Museum. As well as a writer, Natalie is also a visiting tutor at the European Institute of Design in Barcelona, and half of curatorial research project Haunted Machines which looks at the use of magical narrative in technology.

Torange Khonsari is co-founder of the art and architecture practice public works and course leader of MA: Design for Cultural Commons at London Metropolitan University. Her projects are socially and politically motivated and directly impact public space, working with communities, grassroots organisations, government bodies and cultural institutions.

Nils Norman is a London/Amsterdam-based artist, writer and educator working across public art, architecture and urban planning. His projects are informed by local politics and ideas on alternative economic, ecological systems and play. From 2007-2017 he was Professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen where he helped facilitate the School of Walls and Space.

Nina Power is a philosopher and cultural critic. She is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy the University of Roehampton. Nina has written extensively on feminist theory, art and activism and is the author of *One Dimensional Woma*n.

Joseph Rykwert is a globally renowned critic and historian who became one of very few writers to be awarded the RIBA's highest honour in 2014, the Royal Gold Medal. He is the author of countless books and essays, including the widely acclaimed *On Adam's House in Paradise: the Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History*, first published in 1971.

Vera Sacchetti is a design critic, co-curator of TEOK Basel and co-founder of editorial consultancy Superscript. She serves in a variety of curatorial, research and editorial roles, most recently as associate curator of the 4th Istanbul Design Biennial – A School of Schools. Her writing has appeared in *Disegno*, *Metropolis* and *The Avery Review*, among others.

Eleanor Saitta is a hacker, designer, artist, writer, and barbarian. She makes a living and a vocation of understanding how complex, transdisciplinary systems and stories fail and redesigning them to fail better. Among other things, she consults on strategy and architecture for firms seeking to build or grow their security practices or secure specific products, advises news organisations and NGOs targeted by nation states, and builds immersive transmedia participation events.

Ben Terrett is a designer and CEO at Public Digital which helps governments and large organisations around the world adapt to the internet era. He's won various industry awards including the Design Museum's Design of the Year and a D&AD Black Pencil. Ben holds a series of non-exec roles; a Governor of University of the Arts London, a member of the HS2 Design Panel and an advisor to the London Design Festival.

Stacco Troncoso is the advocacy coordinator for Commons Transition and the P2P Foundation, and a co-founder of the Guerrilla Translation collective. He is the designer and content editor for CommonsTransition.org, the P2P Foundation blog and the Commons Strategies Group website.

John Thackara is a writer and advisor. His book *How To Thrive In the Next Economy: Designing Tomorrow's World Today* will be published in China in December. John curated the Doors of Perception conference for 20 years, in Amsterdam and India, and was commissioner of the social innovation biennial, Dott 07 and the French design biennial City Eco Lab. He is a Senior Fellow at the Royal College of Art.

Ann Marie Utratel is part of the Commons Transition team, and is a co-founder of the Guerrilla Translation collective. Her work helps connect a widening network of people involved in forward-thinking communities including the Commons and P2P movement, collaborative economy, open licensing, open culture, open cooperativism, and beyond.

Ben Vickers is a curator, writer, explorer, publisher, technologist and luddite. He is CTO at the Serpentine Galleries in London, co-founder of Ignota Books and an initiator of the open-source monastic order unMonastery.

Convivial Tools Curators

Justin McGuirk Justin McGuirk is Chief Curator at the Design Museum. He has been head of Design Curating & Writing at Design Academy Eindhoven, director of Strelka Press, the design critic of *The Guardian*, and the editor of Icon magazine. His book *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture* is published by Verso.

Sumitra Upham is Curator of Public Programmes at the Design Museum. Previously, she was Design Curator at Oxo Tower Wharf, Associate Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London and part of the exhibitions team at White Cube, London. She holds an MA in Curating Contemporary Design from Kingston University.