Aesthetics of Care
Teacher Training Programme

Introduction

An 'Aesthetics of Care with Ecology in Technological Education' (AoC, heretofore) has been defined by the PR1 team of the ECT Lab + 'Aesthico' project as 'a process' whose aim 'is ethically responsible action'. This process, the definition continues, 'is informed/activated by sensory experience, and shaped by knowledge and aesthetic consciousness. This entails a caring for ourselves, others and the planet'.

This process of caring and the definition as a whole are steeped in feminist discourse and its critique of patriarchal society and traditional, virtue-based conceptions of ethics. A feminist ethic of care points to how care needs to become a central value to contemporary society concerns (Gilligan, 1982, 2011; Noddings,1984), and sees it as 'everything we do to maintain, contain, and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible' (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, 40). In this wide-ranging idea of care, seeds of references to questions of sustainability and technology that are also addressed in the AoC definition can be seen.

As to sustainability, its concerns are implicitly understood in the AoC definition as a matter of relationality. Seen through this prism, care can be said to include 'generalized relational and affective elements' (Milligan & Wiles, 741) that go beyond caring *about* or *for* specific objects or beings. Hence, a concern with the environment which places the AoC definition in close proximity to such approaches to sustainability as the so-called 'Circles of Social Life' (James, 2014). This is a general framework that contemplates four basic domains of social life: ecology, economics, politics, and culture. All four are seen as part of an integrated social whole that concerns the human condition.

It is in this sense that technology is conceived of in the AoC definition. No longer seen (from an anthropological perspective) as a simple tool, technology is understood as a process of becoming human, a process of mediation in the world that has ethical consequences. Technology is likewise envisaged as a form of praxis or practical wisdom (*phronesis*) that should be approached critically, drawing on the insights of such thinkers as Aristotle, Heidegger or Stiegler.

The latter's idea of a 'therapeutics of care' (2010, 2018) is useful for characterising the role of education in the AoC definition. Inherent in it is an approach to pedagogical issues that critiques contemporary terms of production and the physical

impact of consumption, as well as aiming at a decoupling of curriculum design from the short termism of the labour market.

This and all the other aspects covered by the AoC definition are understood as having an aesthetic dimension, as critical processes of care necessarily entail knowledge and, most importantly, experience. This approach to the aesthetic follows recent developments in the field (Saito, 2022; Thompson, 2023) but also looks back to Baumgarten's original use of the term in the context of a science of sensory experience. It is in keeping too with feminist perspectives that promote a pluralistic conception of the discipline. Ultimately, it points to an aesthetics that can be considered as a kind of 'beholding', invoking affective relations that entail new ways of thinking technology and the environment beyond economic extraction. (Frasier 2016, 2021; Lynch 2022).

References:

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Key words:

- Process
- Relationality
- Action
- Ethics
- Aesthetics
- Action
- Sensory
- Experience
- Knowledge
- Care
- Others
- Self
- Planet

Overall Aims

Aesthico Teacher Training Module aims to introduce teachers to current ideas of aesthetics, care, relationality and sustainability in the Anthropocene era, as coalescing in the notion of an aesthetics of care. The framework will provide teachers with a variety of theoretical and practical resources that will direct them to successfully embed the module within their curriculum.

Objectives

- Prepare and present a toolkit of care ready to be used within HEIs at various levels within technological education programmes.
- Deliver a task-based hands-on toolkit that can be adapted to any discipline and support teachers with integrating thinking and practices based on the principles of an aesthetics of care. (6)
- Introduce teachers to speculative, 'what if' and future scenario methodologies as a way to implement, test and understand the aesthetics of care within a relational world. (5)
- Use active participation in role play and structured play, to communicate an aesthetics of care through a relational, affective and cognitive experience. (3) (4)
- Facilitate teachers to deliver an ecological approach to the curriculum, where students can map 'self' and 'other' as concerns within a relational world.

- Enable teachers to apply their discipline specific experience and expertise to integrate ecological and ethical values into their teaching practices using accessible resources. (1)
- Provide teachers with guidelines, methods and tools to successfully prepare and implement aesthetics of care approaches in their teaching practices. (2)

Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes are divided into three categories. The first three (Understanding the Aesthetics of Care) are oriented towards learners understanding the principles of the AoC and how it applies within their own educational context. The second three (Teaching with the Aesthetics of Care) are about learners being able to teach according to the principles of the AoC employing innovative teaching methodologies. The third set (Evolving the Curriculum) are about learners understanding the provided toolkit and reflecting upon how to evolve their own curricula.

Understanding the Aesthetics of Care

1. Learners understand the principles of the aesthetics of care and appreciate the importance of integrating this into their teaching practice.
2. Learners know how the aesthetics of care applies within their own disciplines and understand the responsibilities of students, teachers and practitioners of these disciplines to themselves and others within a relational world.
3. Learners are able to examine and question teaching materials, pedagogical approaches and processes, with the aim of redirecting attention to what matters for a relational, sustainable and dependent world. Refer to the diagram below.

Teaching with the Aesthetics of Care

4. Learners know how to use structured games and role play in order to communicate the aesthetics of care in relational, affective and cognitive terms.
5. Learners understand how to act as facilitators, guiding participants to engage in active involvement, self-reflection and interdisciplinary approaches**.**
6. **Learners understand how to use speculative, 'what if' and future scenario methodologies as a means of communicating the principles of the aesthetics of care and exploring its implications within particular disciplinary configurations.**
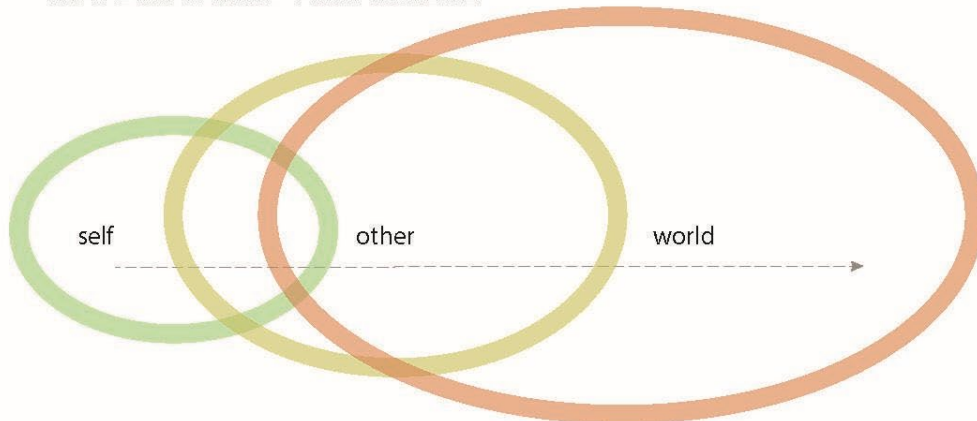
Evolving the Curriculum

7. Learners are familiar with a hands-on toolkit for communicating the principles of an aesthetics of care and understand how to employ this toolkit within their teaching practice in a manner appropriate to the needs of their particular discipline and student cohort.

8. Learners are able to modify teaching curriculum and instructions accordingly, reflecting the needs of their students and creating a common playground for all technological education disciplines

THE THREE ECOLOGIES – Felix Guattari 1989

mental   social   environmental
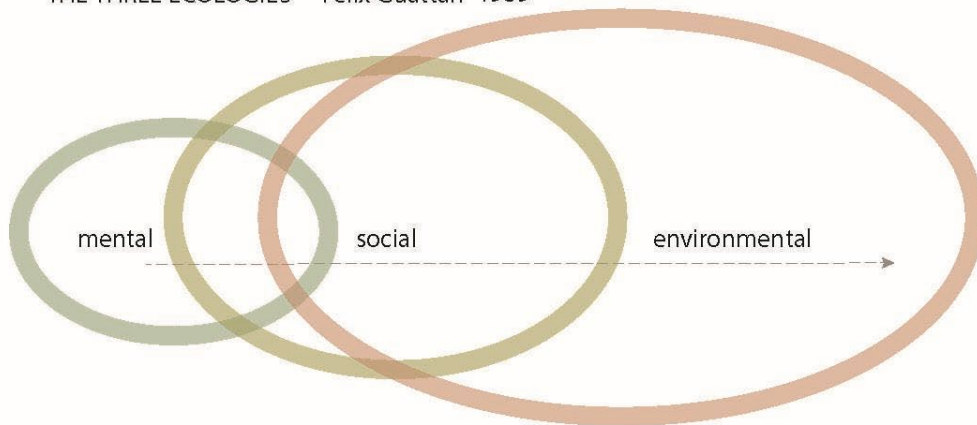
AESTHETICS of CARE – Yuriko Saito 2022

self   other   world

Mapping Learning Outcomes to Activities

Module Activity	Description	Learning Outcomes Met
Introduction to Module **Definition of an AoC** **Introduction to Theoretical resources, bibliography.** **Principles of AoC** **/Meet and Greet**	Present aesthetics of care: Content - Learners presented with a definition, principles, bibliography, case-studies (from PR1) Audience - introduce themselves, discuss their disciplines and background. Use Results	(1) Learners understand the principles of the aesthetics of care and appreciate the importance of integrating this into their teaching practice. (2) Learners know how the aesthetics of care applies within their own disciplines and understand the responsibilities of students, teachers and practitioners of these disciplines to themselves and others within a relational world.
Critically discussing why game-play would be appropriate	Facilitators Guide: Rules Instructions Options Teams	(4) Learners know how to use structured games and role play in order to communicate the aesthetics of care in relational, affective and cognitive terms.
Game Play/Role Play Using game play to consider the world they experience 'as is' in order to use game/role play to speculate,	Interactive experience Various pathways Group / collaborative work - critically discussing social, economic and political positions in relation to AoC	(5) Learners understand how to act as facilitators, guiding participants to engage in active involvement, self-reflection and

discuss 'what if', to imagine 'what could be' senarios		interdisciplinary approaches**.** (6) Learners understand how to use speculative, 'what if' and future scenario methodologies as a means of communicating the principles of the aesthetics of care and exploring its implications within particular disciplinary configurations**.** (7) Learners are familiar with a hands-on toolkit for communicating the principles of an aesthetics of care and understand how to employ this toolkit within their teaching practice in a manner appropriate to the needs of their particular discipline and student cohort.
Overall Reflection on module	Open ended results Discussion / debate Reasseeing perspectives Reflection - personal & group Feedback: Game Project Relatability & relevance Experience design methods – using a mapping method to reflect where you are positioned (in your discipline) before the application of an 'Aesthetics of Care' framework is applied. Then where the discipline is (or could be) with the new	(8) Learners are able to modify teaching curriculum and instructions according individual needs of their students, creating a common playground for all technological education disciplines (3) Learners examine and question teaching material, pedagogical approaches and processes, redirecting attention to matters for a relational, sustainable

	perspective. (linked to learning outcome 5). This is a method in systems design. Create 'journey maps', 'scenarios' (to tell a simple story, example) for where in your discipline changes could happen with the application of an 'Aesthetics of Care'	and dependent world. Refer to the diagram.

Practical resources, methods, and tools

Revolt Game will be added by the end of the year.

Atlas of Weak Signals

One of the suggested group activities/games that has been redesigned and tested to align with the program's objectives is the open-source game called Atlas of Weak Signals. Designed by Mariana Quintero for Fab Lab Barcelona, this toolkit offers a range of emerging scenarios, shared visions, underlying trends, opportunities, and challenges in an open-ended format.

The Atlas of Weak Signals provides a group work methodology for questioning and challenging existing systems. It employs simple techniques and key topics to stimulate critical thinking, problem-solving, and debates.

Description

The Atlas of Weak Signals: Interactive Workshop presents an array of indicators, known as 'Weak Signals,' that record and highlight future scenarios and trends impacting human society, technological development, and ecology. The workshop's objective is to facilitate a cooperative exercise that encourages participants to explore opportunities, threats, challenges, and shared visions related to innovation, research, and future business prospects.

This course is structured as a series of sequential workshops where students form groups to analyse various topics. These workshops are delivered in a tabletop board game format, utilising a collection of pre-designed cards. The game is divided into five alternating levels.

Guidelines

- In the initial phase, students collaboratively establish a shared design space, where they analyse the topic, they intend to explore. They begin by selecting a collection of future scenarios from the first set of cards in the game.

- As the game progresses, the group encounters a series of random indicators, known as 'Weak Signals.' During this phase, students select the indicators that are most relevant to their objectives and engage in discussions and reflections.

- The game subsequently provides a list of potential future opportunities, showcasing them in multiple scenarios and ideas for the students. This process is punctuated by intervals for analysis, discussion, and editing.

- As the game nears its conclusion, the team encounters a series of random challenges that steer the progression of the game towards unexpected scenarios.

- Collaboratively, the team records their reviews, concerns, and thoughts from each student, contributing to the development of a complex shared design space (as shown on the example page).

- Each cycle of workshops can either function as a self-contained experience or be part of an ongoing, open-ended journey.

Key Points

The program's structure offers a comprehensive blend of knowledge, encompassing critical analysis, personal responsibility, research skills, and an approach to learning that emphasises research methodologies.

Concerns:	Actions:	Reactions:
Social	Respond	Care for myself
Economical	Experiment	Care for others
Ecological	Speculate	Care for the planet

DESIGN SPACE

DESIGN SPACE
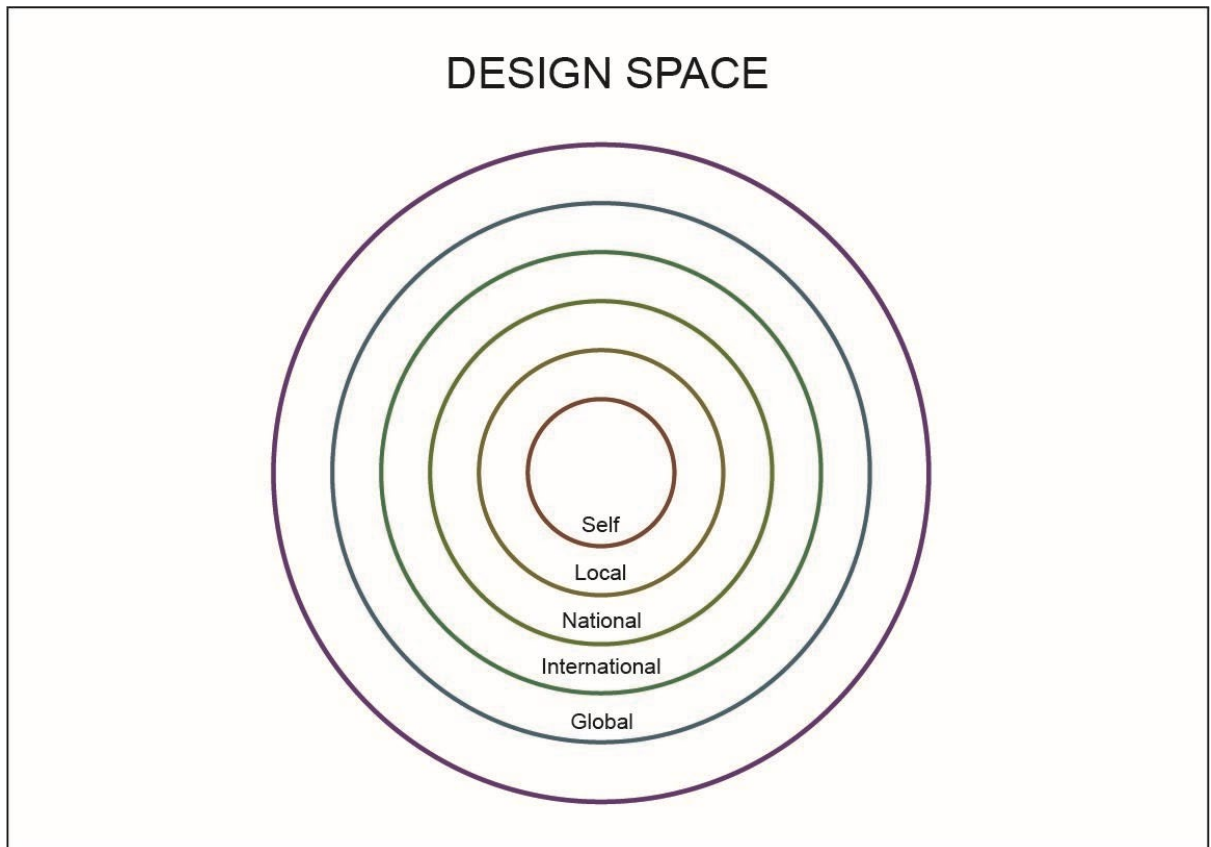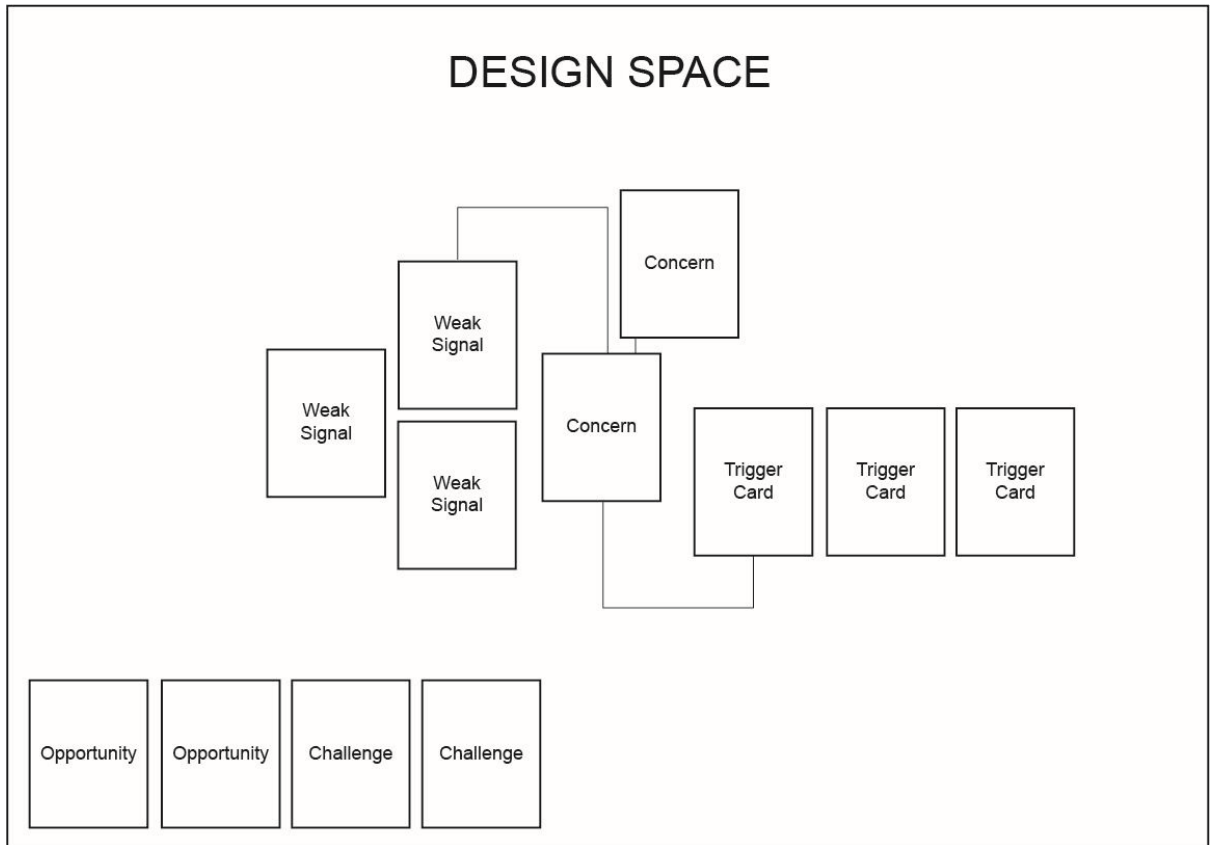
Materials

X5 sets of cards (attached as PDF open documents)

1. Weak Signals
2. Areas of Opportunity
3. Challenges
4. Random Triggers Cards
5. Concern Cards

Large size paper

Pens, highlighters, markers

Post it notes