

DESIGN & DESIGN THINKING AS DRIVING FORCE FOR INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY WITHIN BUSINESSES?

What can design achieve today? What should it achieve? What role does a designer play in processes of social change? Using these questions as a starting point, the ewoTALK focused on the much-debated method of design thinking. Design thinking is based upon interdisciplinary teams, visualization and a clearly defined brainstorming process, and by now has become more than just a creative process. What was originally developed as a method of innovation for products has today become a whole new way of seeing the human being in relation to work. The question is: How do we want to live, learn and work in the twenty-first century?

In design, all the steps of a given development process must be sequentially linked to one another; it is thus always necessary to rethink adopted pathways and perhaps to abandon them, to weave together various disciplines. "In order to do this you need a certain overview," said Jörg Boner. The designer today must be able to take up different perspectives and, in so doing, bring something to the table that is missing today in many areas. Stephan Ott added that it is especially important that one doesn't rely on what was valid in the past. One must be able to engage in that which is new; trust is a prerequisite for doing this.

Nitzan Cohen understands design thinking as going one step further, as constant and critical reflection. There are too few companies that engage in it. He put it this way: "Many companies deal with their resources poorly: they rely only on marketing, which is not enough."

For Jörg Boner, the way a project starts off is interesting. "You start out and you don't know exactly what is going to come out of it. You allow the process to unfold, and you have to accept the unknown to a certain degree. You're a beginner again with every project, and you have to be able to deal with that." Nitzan Cohen said that questioning the questions is important for him; that is, requirements for a project are not something to be accepted blindly. Viewed in this way, companies cannot really afford to work without designers – not only because another way of thinking is important, but also they are necessary if you want to engage on a deeper level.

It's also critical to take on responsibility for processes, because what we do always has consequences. Here ethics comes into play; social design is an important area within the discipline. Jörg Boner emphasized that it's important to him to approach things with due care and in a respectful way.

The designer is important today because he or she brings along skills that are needed everywhere: a willingness to take a step back and to look at things from a distance, before plunging back into the act of designing.

Using the Swiss company Moving Walls as an example, Jörg Boner explained concretely how a successful collaboration can take place. Moving Walls procures tools for new thinking and new forms of collaboration. Jörg Boner has developed the product to this end, with large surfaces to be set up, which are portable and modular. As the company itself puts it: "Anyone who goes down new paths and wants to let the creative juices flow needs space. Large surfaces to inspire great thinking and great ideas."

An entrepreneur from the audience put it succinctly: "Design thinking is an essential component for future entrepreneurial success."