

OPEN CALL

**(UN-)LEARNING
PLACES**

JAN 9-13, 2019

**THE NEW ALPHABET
SCHOOL**

**HAUS DER KULTUREN
DER WELT (HKW),
BERLIN, GERMANY**

**APPLICATION
DEADLINE:
SEPT 15, 2018**

HKW
DAS NEUE ALPHABET

Haus der Kulturen der Welt

(Un-)Learning Place (Jan 9–13, 2019)

The present is characterized by a crisis of the established epistemic-political order. Outdated categories and terms no longer function and representational logics fail to grasp the complexity of contemporary phenomena. Increasingly global societies experience a sharp rise in social complexity, accelerated by digital infrastructures. In this situation, it is necessary to unlearn abstract, theoretical modes of referring to the world and to develop practical methods of constructing, situating and criticizing reality in order to derive new theoretical ordering systems from them.

During the *Opening Days* of HKW's new long-term project *Das Neue Alphabet* in January 2019, HKW will set up a temporary space for gathering, discussion and workshops—a unique *(Un-)Learning Place* curated by Boris Buden and Olga von Schubert. In the five-day curriculum international participants are invited to take part in *(Un-)Learning Tracks* (listed below) to work with curatorial, artistic, or activist strategies in close collaboration with self-organized research collectives and independent artists and curators.

(Un-)Learning Tracks:

How can a library of African diasporic writing be cataloged without reproducing oppressive categories? Can the necro-aesthetics of Natural History Museums be reframed by changing museum taxonomies? How do our body molecules tell stories of their century-old political suppression and how can we reread them? What are modes of resistance in digital network cultures and what could spaces of learning and unlearning look like in a world permeated by institutional infrastructures of dominance and cultural supremacy?

In eight *(Un-)Learning Tracks* the *(Un-)Learning Place* seeks out strategies to navigate through the inherent classification and ordering systems of archives, libraries, museums, institutional architectures and digital networks and offers approaches to situating and negotiating research in artistic, site-specific, poetic, and bodily practices. In a lexicographical laboratory, by cataloging a library, by rearranging existing museum taxonomies, by reconfiguring data, and by poetically transgressing existing terminologies and given spatial allocations, participants of the *(Un-)Learning Tracks* are invited to challenge established perspectives and collectively develop ways of restructuring the order of things.

(Un-)Learning Track 1

Laboratory for Lexicography

convened by Fehras Publishing Practices

(Un-)Learning Track 2

The New Education: Denaturalizing the Cultural Pedagogy of Museum Technologies

convened by ASSET productions

(Un-)Learning Track 3

Embodying the Digital Ornament—Emphatic Vocabularies of Collective Molecular Bodies

convened by knowbotiq

(Un-)Learning Track 4

Information Rules—Political Economy of Life Inside Networked Computer Systems

convened by Telekommunisten

(Un-)Learning Track 5

Navigating Data Congestion

convened by Tactical Technology Collective

(Un-)Learning Track 6

Spaces of Learning

convened by raumlabor berlin

(Un-)Learning Track 7

Things Fall Apart—How to Implement a New System of Thinking Within the Context of the Library

convened by Each One Teach One (EOTO) e. V.

(Un-)Learning Track 8

Theoretical Practice

convened by diffrakt | centre for theoretical periphery

Please find extensive descriptions of each track on

hkw.de/en/DNA

How to participate

Participants of *The New Alphabet School / (Un-)Learning Place* will be able to attend several of the *(Un-)Learning Tracks*. Each track will offer an intense practical workshop as well as a specific theoretical entry point to the program of the *Opening Days of Das Neue Alphabet*. In concentrated working groups of 8–10 people, projects in response to the lectures, screenings and artistic performances will be pursued in dialogue with the convenors of the tracks. Please let us know three preferences for the tracks you would like to attend and state the reason why in your motivation letter.

Participants will also be able to attend the public program of the *Opening Days of Das Neue Alphabet*, with contributions by Kader Attia, Filipa César, Kate Crawford, Simon Denny, Karin Harrasser, Yuk Hui, Sybille Krämer, Trevor Paglen, Felix Stalder, Hito Steyerl, and many more. In daily plena, participants of the *(Un-)Learning Place* will have the chance to exchange their ideas with the scholars and artists from the *Opening Days* program.

Linguistic and poetic observers will act as mediators between the public *Opening Program* and the non-public *(Un-)Learning Place*, among them Gigi Argyropoulou, Gilly Karjevsky and Nicoline van Harskamp.

Who can participate

The call for participation is addressed to master's and doctoral students from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds including the arts, humanities, social and natural sciences, design, and architecture. We also welcome applications from independent artists, self-organized writers, intellectuals, researchers, curators, coordinators, editors, journalists, or activists from outside of academia, or from professionals working within institutions with collections, archives or other representational systems of knowledge, for which new conceptual frames might be needed.

Participation in *the (Un-)Learning Place* is free of charge. Free catering and basic accommodation will be provided for all participants throughout the five-day curriculum. However, participants are expected to pay their own travel costs. A limited number of needs-based travel grants can be provided by HKW upon request. Please contact us as soon as possible if you need support to finance your travels.

Submission

We are seeking proposals consisting of a short CV and a motivation letter in which three options must be stated as to which of the *(Un-)Learning Tracks* you would like to participate in. The motivation letter should have a length of 300–500 words and include information on your own research interests and/or practices as well as a statement on which kinds of settings, formats, and methods you think would be needed to negotiate the diverse and equally valid knowledge approaches existing in the world—in and outside of academia. Please formulate ideas on how you would create translation situations or raise awareness for untranslatabilities. How would you envision mutual hybridization, experiences of unlearning, collective reading and writing in your *(Un-)Learning Place*?

Please include contact details for 1 or 2 references if possible. Proposals should be sent as pdf files to newalphabet@hkw.de

- Deadline for application submission: September 15, 2018

- Notification of acceptance: October 1, 2018

Requirements

Applicants should be committed to interdisciplinary collaboration, collective learning, mutual respect and engaged discussion. Active participation is expected both during the *(Un-)Learning Place* program and the Opening Days of *Das Neue Alphabet*.

The program language is English.

If your level of English proficiency might not suffice to attend the program, please contact us and we will try and organize a translator for you.

Further Information

hkw.de/en/DNA
newalphabet@hkw.de

(Un-)Learning Place is part of *Das Neue Alphabet*, curated by Bernd Scherer and his team.

Head of Project: Annette Bhagwati

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The New Alphabet School (2019–21)

As part of HKW's new long-term project *Das Neue Alphabet*, *The New Alphabet School* is a school for artistic, curatorial, archival, poetic, activist, critical and affirmative research practices. Over the course of 3 years, it will function as a colloquium to engage in discussions and develop ideas for HKW enthusiasts, new voices in the field, and those who already collaborate with HKW. HKW offers a space for research approaches outside of academic, disciplinary, or genre constraints, seeking different methods of learning and unlearning in order to rethink the idea of criticism as a practice of shared responsibility and care. *The New Alphabet School* will combine a HKW-based colloquium and site-specific workshops at libraries, archives, collections, and museums worldwide. In this fieldwork, taxonomies, categories or institutional frameworks will be analyzed in order to come to an understanding of the logics of cultural domination, national chauvinism or human exceptionalism that permeate institutional landscapes in the field of culture and beyond and to develop strategies of reframing and renarrating the discourses they produce.

Das Neue Alphabet (2019–21)

Can we read the script in which the world today is writing its own future? Do we understand the language in which it says farewell to the alphabets of yesterday, which are too slow to catch up with the speed of bits and algorithms or to follow the stories of genetic codes? The letters of which our centuries-old alphabet of geopolitics is composed—the nation states and their political agendas—are increasingly employed for misspellings. Taxonomies, categories, indexes, catalogues, institutional infrastructures and theoretical languages no longer apply to the complexity of lived realities, thus alternative ways of knowledge production gain importance. Do we need a new alphabet—one that does not follow the old modern logic of newness? Who will be called upon to compose its signs and who will spell them out?

These are only a few of the questions posed by HKW's new long-term project *Das Neue Alphabet*. The title of the project is intended both as a diagnosis and a provocation, focusing on the writing technologies that govern our world today, just as much as on vernacular, opaque, or marginalized ways of knowing. Strategies of resistance against the matrix of a single alphabet and artistic methods of appropriation and creolization will be probed in collective processes of hybridization and transcultural encounters. In a world increasingly permeated by written code, *Das Neue Alphabet* seeks out ways of recoding the text that builds reality.



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