

TO TWO FIDELS

A Mapping The Design World Manifesto & Tactical Manual
Mapping The Design World — CAHIER 2
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100
SNAPSHOTS
OF
GUERRILLA
SURVIVAL
PRAPS

MAX
BORKA
FORM
FOLLOWS
FACE

BY WAY

OF AN

INTRO:

Founded in July 2012, *Mapping The Design World* itself was set up as a kind of experiment. Starting from the observation that the ruling design scene and the industry which it is blindly serving have brought the globe and humanity in deep crisis and to the brink of disaster, the initiative aims to serve as a platform for information, debate and exchange on the rapidly growing number of projects that engage in a fundamentally different kind of design. One major difference is that they take the global context as their standpoint — including the environment and the well-being of the next generations — instead of mainly focusing on the (commercial) interests of a few specific target-groups, such as the corporate industry. Different as these innumerable projects may be from each other — coming from all kind of directions, and working on a great variety of issues — those who are really successful also have several other characteristics in common, such as the fact that a community and its problems are often their main material. Grassroots and bottom-up, they are therefore often also underfunded and working on a micro-level, while they need resonance on a macro-scale in order to escape isolation and to be really effective. As we shall see further on in this booklet, only of late, new and powerful tools — such as 3D and the Internet — have made this combining of micro and macro possible, thus also turning Che Guevara's *Foco* or *Foquismo* theory into reality — the utopian ideology that grew out of his premise that a small group of dedicated men can set off a revolution based on a hit and run guerilla strategy, executed by a mixed bag of individuals and squads, flexible and mobile, always looking for the cracks in the system. For a long time, Guevara's own further path of life has

seemed to be the best proof that he was wrong. But as Bruce Mau, author of *Massive Change* pointed out: “The wrong answer is the right answer in search of a different question.” Since the rise of the Social Media it looks like Che’s theory might be realizable. Virally spread by these media, the effect of some of the aforementioned emerging new design projects is such that it also brings recollections to mind of what the mathematician, meteorologist and pioneer of the *Chaos Theory* Edward Norton Lorenz described as The Butterfly Effect, a scientific phenomenon that took its name from the theoretical example of a hurricane’s formation in Texas being contingent on whether or not a butterfly had simply flapped its wings in Brazil several weeks earlier.

Mapping The Design World aims to be a catalyst that helps to synchronize this flapping, starting from the assumption that a *Massive Change* for the better might still be on its way if many more of these initiatives would flap their wings together, and that even when the world can no longer be saved and there is little to gain, there is also little to be lost anyway.

Different from similar initiatives that work on a more academic level, the initiative started off with what we thought to be the most accessible social medium imaginable, a simple *Facebook community page*, on which we published — and continue to publish — examples of good practice on a daily basis, presenting them through descriptions, and focusing on key tactics.

The archive and events of Mapping have been set up to grow in number and coverage over time — in a project that is intentionally open-ended, while the process behind

it is also considered as a participatory one, aiming to operate through a growing international network of contributors. Far from completely covering the entire area (which is itself emerging) *Mapping* aims to highlight a representative selection of contemporary practices, using them as a platform for meeting, dialog, debate, and exchange not only among practitioners and educators, curators, producers, critics and others in the field of design, but also with a public that is as broad as possible. Three months after the launch of the Facebook community page it published a first issue of a cahier. Freely distributed at the *Mapping the Design World Meeting Point* that stood central to the International Biennial for Design and Social Innovation in Liège, Belgium, the magazine presented *100 examples of Social Design*, taken from an equal number of countries. One of the points the cahier intended to make was that, despite of the desperate situation, the number of possibilities that a designer can pick from is endless. Today, almost one year later, the number of practices profiled, documented and collected on the Facebook page has already exceeded 400, while special sections on that page focus on phenomena such as *Mind Maps*, *Design Manifestos*, and *Urban Interventionists*. Since Facebook has a very limited format when it comes to archiving, this growing body of textual, visual and video material will be integrated in a soon to be launched *Mapping weblog*, that will run parallel to the Facebook community page but also provide an opportunity to categorize the selection of projects.

New initiatives include a traveling *Mapping Toolbox* event that is living its world premiere in Vienna, and that is being launched together with this second cahier, called

Form Follows Foco, 100 Snapshots of Guerilla Survival Props. The *Toolbox* consists of a trunk filled with a series of props that constantly adapt themselves to the place and event it travels to — offering the tools for an office, an exhibition, a discussion, a diner, a film screening, or all at once and much more, depending on the circumstances. In Vienna, for instance, a pilgrimage to Che Guevara's statue in the Donaupark, and a picnic-cum-debate near the monument is one of the events planned, while an exhibition at the *Walking Chair Gallery* will exclusively consist of a graphic elaboration of the texts that are published in this cahier.

Countering a culture that depends all too much on a thoughtless celebration of images, and despite its title, this cahier also only contains text: 100 notes and observations that have been gathered during *Mapping's* first year of existence. Without having the least intention of presenting an exhaustive approach to the subject matter, the body of notes has the loose and non-hierarchical structure of a cloud formation and Gilles Deleuze's *Rhizome*, which also characterizes the weak and open network that connects Social Design projects. Constantly overlapping and contradicting themselves, they are what they are: doodles, scribbles and snapshots. Together they are meant to be little more than a rallying cry, calling designers and anyone else involved with design to take responsibility for the powerful skills they wield and to consider carefully their effects. It is intended as a platform to set the ball rolling for further discussions and research, but certainly not as an ideology or a set of dogmatic beliefs. And yet, we also secretly hope that this 'Manifesto of Sorts' might also offer a first glimpse into the morphology

of the unique language this rapidly expanding field of Social and Critical Design is developing.

We also hope that this cahier will only be the second in a series of many, complementing the online archives and each elaborating on a particular theme that has emerged over time within the project, avoiding the salami tactics and superficiality of a normal magazine, and constantly changing its form, adapting itself to the theme and the material available.

Our immense gratitude goes to Fidel Peugeot and Karl Emilio Pircher from *Walking Chair Design Studio & Gallery* for making this second cahier and the *Mapping Toolbox* possible, their contagious enthusiasm, inspiration, and patience. To Giovanna Massoni and Anna Pannekoek, too, who have been supporters from the very beginning. And to Egon Jazz, the soul brother who also developed the Mapping weblog.

Max Borka



THE ONLY
GOOD DESIGN
WILL BE *1*
BAD DESIGN

If we still want to stand a chance of surviving, the only good design will often have to be bad design. It will do its ultimate best to be as bad as possible, useless and ugly, awkward and awful, maladjusted and ill-mannered, irrational and irresponsible. It will declare war on the tyranny of anything that is proclaimed to be good design by today's consumer society: slick, glamorous, luxurious, good looking and highly seductive, or simply practical, but invariably lethal and perilous — 'formes fatales' that keep on promising heaven but have long been proven to be a one-way ticket to its antipode.

TRUE
INNOVATION
COMES
FROM WHORES
AND PIMPS ²

Tomorrow's best design ist often the offshoot of what is held in contempt by today's ruling classes. As the grand old man of radical and anti-design, the late **Ettore Sottsass**, used to say: true innovation comes from outcasts, the unsophisticated and hungry living in the suburbs and periphery, or whores and pimps — unhindered as they are by the canons that define good taste and manners.

TRUE CHANGE
COMES FROM
THE OTHER ³
90%

Written and published in the city where the founding father of Social Design, **Victor Papanek**, was born almost a century ago, this notebook celebrates the recent changes that are radically redefining the rules of what good design should be. Coming from the 90% of the world population that **Papanek** championed when he published *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* in 1971, this change could well be the most massive ever — driven by a majority that has been obstinately ignored in the design world up till now.

HUNGRY AND ⁴ ANGRY ON THE PERIPHERY

Most of **Papanek's** 90% live on the periphery, far away from design's glamorous power centers, in places that go from Afghanistan to Zululand — but many could also be your next-door neighbors in London, New York, or Milan. They are hungry and angry. And different from the times when **Papanek** was taking their defense, new tools and techniques have recently popped up that might well allow them to raise a revolution that could be the most radical since the industrial revolution that gave birth to design, about two centuries ago.

HERALDING A TOTALLY 5 NEW LANGUAGE

The Massive Change we plead for might also come with a totally new design language, one that is a radical departure from the one which **Papanek** already denounced when he stated that “design has become the most powerful tool with which man shapes his tools and environments (and, by extension, society and himself),” but also dismissed the Agent of Capitalism to which design had been reduced by then as “the perversion of a great tool,” adding that “there are professions more harmful than industrial design, but only a few,” and that “by creating whole species of permanent garbage to clutter up the landscape, and by choosing materials and processes that pollute the air we breath, designers have become a dangerous breed.”

JUNK BEING THE SYMBOL OF OUR TIME

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Papanek was not alone in raising the alarm. In 1965, addressing the International Design Conference in Aspen, **George Nelson**, one of the leading industrial designers of his time, asked the assembly: “What is the crowning glory of your civilization (...) the symbol as clear a statement as the pyramids, the Parthenon, the cathedrals? What is this symbol? What is its name? Its name is Junk. Junk is the rusty, lovely, brilliant symbol of the dying years of your time. Junk is your ultimate landscape.”

CORPORATE INDUSTRY BEING THE MAIN ⁷ CULPRIT

Today's society may be far more complex and worse. Yet in essence, little has changed. The transnational corporations that **Nelson** and **Papanek** were already blaming as the main culprits have become so powerful that their resources and influence easily overtrump those of most governments and nation states. Steered by this corporate industry, design expanded and globalized its territory in such a way that, even more than before, it came to stand for all tools by which humans try to modify their natural environment — buildings, vehicles, books, advertisements and stage sets, but also cities, ideas, strategies, or structures and things so vast and immaterial that they are impossible to grasp. Today, everything is designed, and design is everywhere. Design is God.

AND A FOOL 8 WITH A TOOL...

However: parallel to the explosive way in which marketing and corporate and industrial design have been conquering the globe, an implosion has continued to impose itself on a semantic level, reducing the notion of design to little more than a lubricant that helps to realize a scarcely hidden agenda: ‘Sell whatever to whoever in whatever way.’ Pretending to be the Tool of Tools — brandishing truisms such as ‘Form follows Function’ — the real status of design most often doesn’t exceed that of a useful fool — while creatives have been degraded to entertainers. Today, design’s main purpose is often little more than to translate brand values into objects and to provide new products — smaller, faster, different, and better adapted to the logistics of a consumerist Tower of Babel, a mechanized society where individuals are completely deprived of any control over their own future, and consumer culture goes blind, ruled by a mindless bureaucracy.

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... STILL
BEING
A FAAL

In the wake of its success, the number of design projects, design fairs, design exhibitions, design biennales, design magazines and books, just name it, keeps on growing at a frenetic pace. Most of them are interchangeable, the only difference being size and the means that they have at their disposal to set up their power display. While anxiously refraining from anything that might even sound in the slightest critical, their language is mostly purely promotional, trying to fortify the position of local industry on design's global map. *Mapping the Design World* aims for a radical redrawing of that map based on totally different criteria.

THE MARKETPLACE ITS ONLY REALITY

As **Thomas Frank** writes in *One Market Under God*, a ‘market populism’ has taken hold of society, in which people’s true desires are expressed and fulfilled through the marketplace — generally viewed as the only reality in the present intellectual landscape. Anything outside this arena is looked at with suspicion as escapist or unreal. Critical positions are dismissed as elitist. It makes the responsibility of designers all the greater, be it only because a world where buying power has more political impact than voting power poses an enormous threat to democracy.

BORN A BASTARD

Low morals already played a decisive role in defining design's identity from the very beginning, in the 1850s, when the word was first used as a synonym for the efforts to improve the poor quality of the products that were manufactured in the wake of the industrial revolution. For design was a bastard child — the industrial revolution being the somewhat sluttish mother, and her lovers many. Physics, Politics, Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy, Theatre, Poetry, or Warfare: their status reached from noble to scum. None of these lovers claimed paternity. Yet they left their mark during the *Bildungsjahre*, bestowing design with the ability to turn its hand to anything, while its bastard status also remained a guarantee for its street credibility.

DESIGN IS A JANUS FACE

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All this might help explain why design still suffers from a multiple personality disorder. It has a Janus face, one side noble and the other scum, invariably speaking in terms of progress, for instance, but its deeds often inspired by the lowest forms of barbarism. The same ambivalence characterized the innovations design introduced over the decades: they were good and bad simultaneously, atomic energy being the most tragic example. So whoever thinks about the future of design will have to take into account this duality — the designer and his double.

A TWO-HEADED MONSTER

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Throughout design history, the same doubleness even characterized the work of the most famous anti-designers and critics, **Ettore Sottsass**, for instance, or **Superstudio**, which schizophrenically advanced by pursuing, on the one hand, pragmatic and commercial furniture designs, typewriters, tram cars, residential and commercial buildings, and on the other by launching visions and wild experiments in which the very reason for being of these same objects was criticized to the bone, and even rejected. Every designer worthy of that name was and still is a two-headed monster — walking the thin line between utopia and the pragmatic, and selling his soul as soon as there's an offer.

AFFLICTED WITH TUNNEL VISION

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Not that this split personality is a problem as such. On the contrary: the sheer infiniteness of its scope and its complexity turned design into a phenomenon that evades all definition and is impossible to grasp. It also provided it with an exhilarating potential, making it as fascinating as it was frustrating, touching every single aspect of our existence. No, problems only started when marketing claimed design's fatherhood, scared off all of the competitors, and turned it into a dandy and a prig, afflicted with tunnel vision, and producing nothing but commodities, corporate, capitalist, consumable — **Nelson's Junk**.

DISCONNECTED FROM REALITY

Papanek and **Nelson** were far from the only ones or the first to criticize the way design had been perverted into a caricature of what it could have been. While from the very beginning its extraordinary dynamics had been fueled by the friction between utopia and pragmatism, many had rejected the way in which that utopia had been more and more reduced by consumer industry into a salesman's dream. Ever since **William Morris** was the first to do so in his *News From Nowhere*, published in 1890, historians have persistently been ignoring this criticism though, in its endeavors to provide design with a history that reads like a concatenation of lies, legends and myths, totally disconnected from reality, and always at the service of the industry. Covering up the dark sides of its existence — such as the fact that most innovations come from the arms industry.

DRIVEN BY THE PROGRAMMED OBsolescence OF GOODS

Over the course of time, some innate handicaps in the marketing system clearly took the overhand, turning design into a serial killer. In the continuous endeavor to create and maintain our desire for new products, and therefore also a constant dissatisfaction with what we have, production was linked to a programmed obsolescence of goods that has them replaced sooner. As **Abraham Moles** indicated, this divided humanity into those that have access to the hermetic ‘black box’ in objects, and can still control their functioning, versus those who can’t. The eternal celebration of the new and of the ‘innovation’ that had to stimulate this obsolescence and to guarantee a return of investment also saddled design with Alzheimer’s disease, and resulted in overproduction and a market that is oversaturated — while many in the industry still see a growth in size and the conquering of new territories as the remedy.

WIPING

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AWAY

VARIETY

The effects of all this are a distressing lowering of quality and social and ecological consequences that are disastrous on a worldwide level in terms of working conditions, limited resources or waste. With design being a typical offshoot of western culture, other cultures were also totally wiped away during the process of mono-cultural market expansion, erasing their memory, identity and social structure. Such is the power of globalization that we have all been forced to speak the same language — the development of a local *Design Dialect* being the only freedom and alternative left.

A THREAT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

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To say that we have a worldwide environmental problem is now a truism. Climate change and global warming, for instance, may already have been the subject of lively scientific discussion since at least the 1960s, but what still seemed a faraway specter then has become a quotidian reality now. We are poisoning ourselves with the stuff we produce, out-gassing, and seeping into our air, our water, our land and our food. It gets into our bodies and into our minds, while designers only keep on feeding the process.

A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

Today graphic design, for instance, has become just another term for advertising, product marketing and brand development — endorsing a consumerism that is running uncontested. It created a psychological environment that is totally saturated with commercial messages and that has become the main framework within which we speak, feel, and think. Its basic criticism was developed by **John Berger** back in 1972, in *Ways of Seeing*: “Publicity turns consumption into a substitute for democracy. The choice of what one eats (or wears or drives) takes the place of significant political choice. Publicity helps to mask and compensate for all that is undemocratic within society. And it also masks what is happening in the rest of the world.” Apart from getting worse, things have not changed since then.

THRIVING ON COMPETITION AND ANARCHY

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Up till now, society has simply been unable to summon the political or economic will to deal successfully with the aforementioned problems. It has become pretty clear to all those involved, including the corporate industry, that the material infrastructure of present day society is not sustainable, and that something needs to be done. There are signs of hope: the circular economy, based on **Walter Stahel's** *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle principles* as an alternative for the ruling *linear* one, minimizing waste, has even been adopted by the state owned and run China Coal industry. But the situation is such that only a systematic global approach could save us. And that would call for a form of organization that is in total opposition to the anarchy that is at the core of a capitalism thriving on competition. Meanwhile, the world of design also carries on washing its hands in innocence, denying its crushing responsibility.

NEW F-WORDS HAVE TO SEIZE POWER

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As Vilém Flusser wrote: “The future will above all be a matter of design.” Indeed, but what kind of design? The one that goes *en-avant-comme-avant*? As part of design’s globalization, the last word in the magical formula that still rules the design discourse, *Form Follows Function*, was gradually complemented by a series of other F-words: Finance, Fashion & Fantasy, Fiction & Friction, Force & Farce, Fury & Fairy, Fun, or Funk & Fuck. We argue that if the world still wants to stand a chance at all, it will have to cultivate a panoramic and kaleidoscopic perspective that adopts and gives priority to a multitude of very different F-words like Favela & Fai-da-te, Failure, Futility, Fragility, Famine and Feminism — all too often considered dirty words up till now.

F O R M W I L L

F A L L O W

F O C O

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Most importantly, Form will forcibly also have to embrace Foco or Foquismo, the ideology that grew out of **Che Guevara's** premise that a small group of dedicated men can set off a revolution based on a hit and run guerilla strategy, executed by a mixed bag of individuals and squads, flexible and mobile, always looking for the cracks in the system. For a long time, **Guevara's** own path of life seemed to be the best proof that, somewhere in his calculations, he might have been wrong. Yet, of late, new tools have popped up that have given a boost to chances of turning his theory into reality.

EXPLOITING NEW TOOLS

Ironically, these new tools that could help us are an offspring of the same post-industrial society and consumerism that created the mess we are in, and of what the late **Jean Baudrillard** described as their latest metamorphosis: the 'hyper-real,' a 'reality by proxy' where fulfillment and happiness are no longer dependent on the consumption of physical objects or contacts, but on virtual reality and the transient 'simulacra' that have largely replaced them, mainly under the influence of mass media — a simulacrum being a representation or image imposed on public perception. Likewise, the main medium in the aforementioned new tools is often no longer the object, but the message, a simulacrum or image playing on people's perception, and engaging with our hyper-reality.

JUST- IN- TIME

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Take the Internet. Next to *just-in-time manufacturing*, print-on-demand publishing, *a circular* rather than a *linear* economy, *open-source systems*, and other post-Fordist modes that enable economically more viable, scalable and sustainable production, social networking over Internet is but one of the tools that are already available within the regulatory system and more responsive to rapidly changing conditions.

ARMED WITH THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

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Expressing itself in phenomena such as Facebook and Crowd funding, social networking provides — not just professional designers but anyone — the means to ‘design’ counter-simulacra or images with far more content and substance, and that are far more powerful than the existing ones. By going viral, these simulacra also have the potential to act along what the mathematician and meteorologist and pioneer of the chaos theory **Edward Norton Lorenz** described as *The Butterfly Effect*, a scientific phenomenon that took its name from the theoretical example of a hurricane’s formation in Texas’ being contingent on whether or not a distant butterfly had simply flapped its wings in Brazil several weeks earlier.

BREAKING FREE FROM CAPITALIST MOORINGS 26

Of late, a growing number of design practices have emerged that counter conventional ideas of what design is. Breaking free from their capitalist moorings, they demand a future that seemed no longer. Their critique is not of design as such, but of the mainstream modes of production and consumption to which it has been reduced and that blindly serve the hegemonic ideology of consumer industry. Rather than ultimately focusing on the commercial interests and well-being of one particular group, such as corporate industry, and positioning their value in terms of mass-market demand, return on investment, or other terms of industrially-defined paradigms, they claim a much more social design, taking as many elements and potential stakeholders as possible within the global social tissue as its starting point, such as the natural and urban environment and future generations.

MAPPING AND SYNCHRONIZING THE FLAPPING

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Engaging with political, societal, critical and activist issues, and non-profit, many of these projects are already virally and epidemically multiplying in their endeavor to exist outside of the marketplace, exploiting social networking. Look at Egypt! Look at Tunisia! Istanbul! Sao Paulo! Bulgaria! So imagine what could happen if many more of these initiatives started to flap their wings together! Founded in 2012, *Mapping The Design World* is in itself an experiment. It wants to be a catalyzer helping to synchronize this flapping, starting from the assumption that, even when the world cannot be saved and there's little to gain, there's also little choice left.

IMMUNE TO WALLS AND IDEALOGIES

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From hackers and *Haute Couture Heretics*, over *Shopdropping*, *Craftivism*, and *Guerilla Knitting* — the richness, variety, and imaginativeness of these projects are extraordinary, and so are their tactics. Impossible to hold or control, immune to frontiers, walls or ideologies, they haunt the whole of the globe, each playing on totally different circumstances. There is no Holy Grail to define or describe them, which also makes it a ‘mission impossible’ to give examples that might be illustrative for the whole. So we might as well follow **John Cage**’s advice and stick to the A of anywhere and Afghanistan when picking just one, also because the latter is the very last place one would think of when talking design.

BREAKING DOWN ²⁹ SOCIAL BARRIERS

In 2007 two young Australians, **Oliver Percovich** and **Sharna Nolan**, arrived in Kabul, the Afghan capital, with little more in their luggage than a couple of skateboards. In a country where children make up more than half of the population but have few to no opportunities, their boards quickly drew these children in, like an unstoppable magnetic force. What began as informal skateboarding lessons at an empty fountain soon led — with the help of the Norwegian, Danish, Canadian, and German authorities — to the foundation of Skateistan, Afghanistan's first skatepark and biggest sports facility, and the world's first school to use skateboarding as a hook to lure streetkids into other classroom activities, and prepare them for a proper education. Most importantly, the skateboards also worked as levelers to break down the social barriers between ethnic groups at war, rich and poor, and girls and boys. Nearly 40% of Skateistan's students are girls, in one of the world's most gender-biased societies. Most of them are also poor and illiterate, while others are the children of government ministers.

TRIGGERING TRANSFORMATION

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One of the many other countries most unlikely to be found in design history books is Albania, where **Edi Rama**, Mayor of Bogota, Columbia, took office as the Mayor of the capital, Tirana, immediately formed an army of painters to clad the buildings in the city centre, covering the totalitarian grey of yore with colorful patterning. The effects were as immediate as they were when **Antanas Mockus**, Mayor of Bogota, Colombia, took his pants down during a rally, mooned the public, and by this simple act triggered a transformation process that turned one of the most dangerous cities on the globe into a shining example of urban politics.

GIIVING 31 SIGNS OF HOPE

While Skateistan also became the subject of internationally acclaimed, award-winning documentaries, the success of its first school in Kabul quickly led to the founding of others elsewhere in Afghanistan, and in other war-ridden countries, like Cambodia and Pakistan. As to **Edi Rama**: while remaining Tirana's Mayor for three terms, he was awarded the accolade 'World Mayor' in 2004, and chosen to be one of the 2005 European Heroes by *Time Magazine*. Far less measurable, but all the more important, is the way in which he, like **Mockus** or the initiators of Skateistan, almost single-handedly changed the course of history. Not only did each of them resist and oppose the reigning mood in their country, but they also redesigned the worldwide perception of these countries, giving signs of hope, and demonstrating that all is not lost, that things can be done differently, desperate as the situation may seem, just with some paint cans and skateboards. Or by taking your pants off, and mooning the audience.

SHAPING COMMUNITIES. NOT COMMODITIES

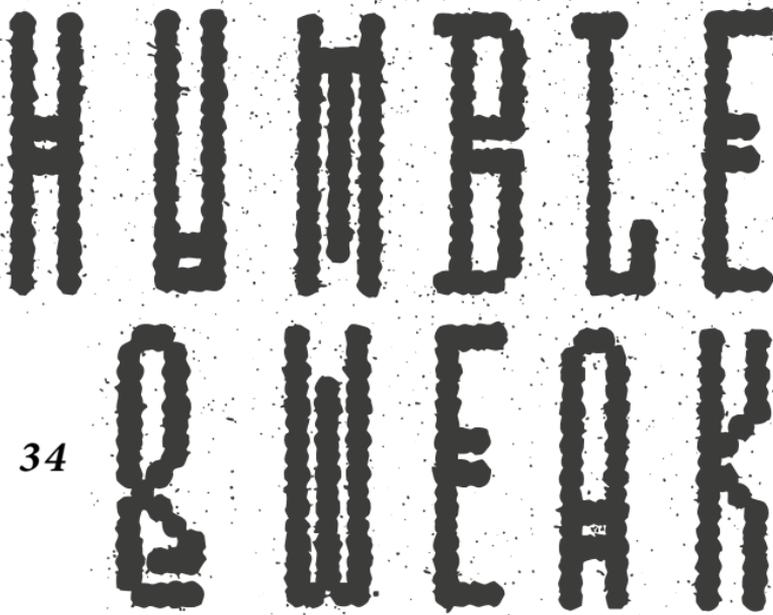
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The new kind of design that the aforementioned projects stand for is totally different from the strictly aesthetic, utilitarian, commercial, and very limited vision we have been indoctrinated with in the past. As **Emily Piloton**, founder of *Project H Design*, wrote in her *Design Revolution Toolkit*, their aim is to “design better solutions for the greater good for people instead of clients, for change instead of consumption.” The clients are usually not the large corporations or advertising firms that steer the present design scene, but underfunded communities and nonprofit organizations. Many projects are self-initiated, non-commissioned, and self- and/or underfunded. And their scope is much wider, taking communities and their needs as a starting point, within a global context, and not just an opportunity to sell the next commodity. As we shall see, to fulfill these needs designers have to reposition themselves completely while operating with different tactics.

EXPERIMENTAL, CRITICAL AND ANTI

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Because of their limited means, but also because they deliberately opted to do so, and despite the vastness of their scope, most of these Foco design projects are small-scale and operate on a micro-level. Coming from a wide array of fields and hardly connected to each other or to the conventional design scene, their order of battle is scattered. Vast divides separate them, which is also expressed in the large variety of names, slogans and labels they brandish: from Eco-, Sustainable and Experimental Design, over Critical, Radical and Anti-Design, Design for Social Innovation or Impact, Human-Centered Design, or Design That Gives A Damn, to Up- and Re-Cycling, Re-This, Re-That, Re-Whatever — making it almost impossible to see the wood for the trees, and the ties that bind them.



The projects that are mostly categorized under ‘Social Design’ want to respond to real needs, while ‘Critical Design,’ for instance, does not have the least intention of being functional on a plain utilitarian level, and — as its most famous proponents, **Anthony Dunne** and **Fiona Raby**, intimate — only wants “to stimulate discussion and debate amongst designers, industry and the public about the aesthetic quality of our electronically mediated existence.” Other projects do not even regard themselves as design. They often operate on the periphery. Their general approach is soft, and their values vary from humble to weak. Plenty of reasons that may explain why many of these projects do not garner the attention they deserve, and remain unnoticed.

A MICRO:MACRO DIALECTICS

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As a future lab, *Mapping The Design World* has set up a worldwide network, scanning, highlighting, propagating, and connecting these projects, offering them a voice, making them more visible. In no way pretending to be exhaustive, the project also aims at bringing these projects together on one and the same platform, where they can communicate. We are well aware that a great deal of them will be “bien étonnés de se retrouver ensemble.” But we also believe that what unites them is much more important than what separates them, and that their power and effectiveness will largely depend on their willingness and their ability to join forces and collaborate. While the local and micro scale most of these projects operate on tends to isolate and to minimize what they are doing — scaling up to Macro is necessary. And they can only do so by cooperating.

AN ENTIRELY

NEW

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FRAMEWORK

We will have to go Macro. For, to mention just one challenge: even without attacking the world's deteriorated and substandard housing, United Nation estimates suggest that the world must build no fewer than 4,000 houses an hour if its increasing population is to be housed and its slums replaced. Far from limiting our thinking to the creation of niche products, we will have to focus on the congestion of cities, global warming, communication that can undo a cold war, and a whole new wave of new industries that are urgently needed. We will have to create an entirely new framework for new ways of life that are ecologically, economically and ethically sound.

STRUCTURED

LIKE

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A RHIZOME

In order to meet these challenges, we will have to aim at a total philosophy and a holistic approach, broadening its specter infinitely, and new ways of working together, independently of the existing industry and corporate thinking. Refusing the old hierarchy and its Euro-American power structure, opting for a non-hierarchical *modus operandi* instead, with a center that is nowhere and everywhere, the network that results will be ruled by a *Liquid Logic*, and extremely flexible. It will have the loose structure of a bank of clouds — constantly changing its configuration — and of **Gilles Deleuze's** and **Felix Guattari's** *Rhizome*. And like a *Rhizome*, it will spread underground.

GOING BACK TO ZERO

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But first we will have to dismantle everything that once solidly stood for the enterprise of design. We will have to deprogram ourselves and disconnect with the soundtrack of self-destruction. We will have to descend into the deep, until we reach the *Zero Degree* and *Primal Soup* where chaos reigns, a state of non-design in which things haven't been manifested or drawn, and the possibilities are still endless. A pure state of near nothingness, where design will be able to question why it is here and what it is about. Designers will have to reconsider their position completely, together with the axioms that up till now have been the origin of their strategies, the codes, conventions, and subcutaneous mechanisms that steer society and our rituals and habits, together with the unbridled capitalism that has been their driving force. From there on they will not just have to develop an entirely new alphabet and lexicon, but also a new grammar — a totally new language.

DOING AWAY WITH CRAP AND GORILLA COSMETICS

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Designers should, before anything else, also stop designing if it is clear that the result can only be crap. At times when even the largest corporations don't know what to do anymore, design will no longer accept being reduced to an industrial object, system or process, whereas we will no longer have to accept being treated like consumers or users. Little has changed since **Victor Papanek** wrote in *Design for the Real World*: "Much recent design has satisfied only evanescent wants and desires, while the genuine needs of man have often been neglected by the designer." Or since **Dieter Rams** stated: "Most think of design in terms of putting lipstick on a gorilla." Future design will avoid cosmetics. It won't make a product look more innovative, powerful or valuable than it really is, and it will not attempt to manipulate the consumer with promises that cannot be kept. The solution will always fit the problem.

MEANINGFUL, NOT 40 BEAUTIFUL

Today's design is meant to keep us dreaming instead of becoming our dreams. Capitalist logic largely reduced the function of the arts and design to entertainment and decoration, next to bringing in money and generating a constant return on investment, while techniques and technicians take care of efficient production. Tomorrow's designers will not accept this. They will beware of Aesthetics — see it as a consequence and never as an ultimate goal. *Relevant* and *meaningful* will replace *beautiful*, *cool*, *cute*, and *nice* as criteria from which design should be created and judged. So down with all worshippers of Mammon and Moloch! Down with all these unsafe, maladapted, and inconvenient products, and with what **Papanek** denounced as 'appearance design,' mainly meant to be showy and frivolous, as a sort of decorative appendage of the fashion world.

DECLARING INNOVATION OUTDATED AND OBSOLESCENCE OBSOLETE 41

Designers will declare the *Innovation Principle* or *Principle of Creative Destruction* outdated. Going back to **Karl Marx** but mainly popularized by the Austrian American economist **Joseph Schumpeter**, these principles are still the motor of the ruling industry, and largely rely on the idea of obsolescence — the state of being in which the user and consumer no longer wants an object or service even though it may still be in good working order, and is convinced into buying a new and slightly improved version of that same old thing, which in turn is soon to become antiquated, discarded and replaced etc., so eternally fueling the *Infernal Machine*. The price of this kind of innovation is recession and depression, while it also turns a blind eye to ethics. The design of the future will go for change and fundamentally better stuff, but not for innovation, or the notion of ‘Progress’ that invariably comes with it, and which is also *Newspeak* for a lack of long-term thinking. Obsolescence will be obsolete.

MAKING THINGS TRANSPARENT

At present, almost all products conceal their workings, and cannot be opened or repaired, since they are designed to be discarded upon failure or obsolescence — as part of a spiraling system that is getting more vicious with the years. It results in a population that are less and less confident in their abilities to use their hands for anything other than pushing buttons and mice — fundamentally not understanding the workings of their built artifacts and environments, and the role and impact that these might have on the world. This will have to change, be it only because we can not expect people to sympathize with greener products if they can't appreciate the consequences of any products at all. Good design will make things understandable by making their inner open and transparent, whether the design is an object or a system.

FACILITATING REPAIR

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A new culture will have to install itself, where we should all start to examine how we could use what already exists to better ends, before designing, producing or acquiring anything new. And design will be interactive, to facilitate repair. If something is broken, we shouldn't end it but mend it. Designers should make the product talk, while users should be taught and tempted to offer objects a new life, instead of needlessly throwing them away. Users should be offered the opportunity to get involved from the beginning in a design process where a *Do-It-Yourself* or *Fai-Da-Te* approach will be central. At best, design will be self-explanatory.

TECHNOLOGICALLY DISOBEDIENT

The need to go for DIY and Repair is not just about the money, it's about a mindset, about ushering in possibilities rather than dead ends, and adding to the object's potential, its history, its soul and its inherent beauty. It's also about independence, not being a slave to technology, and **Ernesto Oroza's** *Technological Disobedience*. Repair is a rehabilitation process, turning even fakes into originals. But designers could also take the process one step further: objects could be designed in such a way that making repairs would come as a creative challenge, and even offer the possibility to turn the object into something totally different from what was originally meant.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL PRAKIS 45

Our anthropocentric worldview is literally killing us, not least because we are the only species that does not design within a *circular* economy or ecosystem in which everything is recycled. Our ways and means are completely antithetical to how the rest of planet earth manufactures. We choose inorganic materials, for instance, precisely because biological organisms cannot consume them, while the natural world does the opposite in order to use the same building blocks over and over. The consequences are disastrous: not only are our resources limited, but we also keep on poisoning the planet with them. We therefore urgently need to realize that design is not just there to serve people, and that we have much bigger problems to deal with. Design will primarily be an environmental and ecological praxis.

NATURE AS A MODEL AND MENTOR

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To effectively contribute to the preservation of the environment and a transition towards a sustainable society, if that is still possible, we will have to develop and celebrate humility in the face of nature, treating it as a model and mentor, not an inconvenience to be evaded or controlled. While trying to re-establish an integral relationship between natural processes and human activity, we will need to optimize a full life-cycle of products and processes that approaches the state of natural systems, conserving resources and minimizing waste and pollution — physical and visual.

MAKING TRASH IRRESISTIBLE

So if we still want to stop humanity in its inexorable downslide from *Cradle-to-Grave*, like pretty much everything in our linear economy, we urgently and massively need to embrace a circular economy, and its *Cradle-to-Cradle* approach. We will have to repair and re-use, recycle and up-cycle. Design will scavenge through the sea of objects that already surround us, and society's trash and junk for odd bits and abandoned pieces, cannibalizing, vandalizing, re- and deconstructing, appropriating, and re-arranging found objects — even the iconic and classic — also in order to create objects with a new dignity, and a three dimensional poetry that is simply irresistible.

TRANSFIGURING
NOTHING
INTO 48
SOMETHING

Design will search for ways to transfigure nothing into something, negative into positive, and scarcity into endless possibilities. The objects that result may be pathetic, weird, wacky, hybrid and monstrous, and some may even be functional and beautiful. But as **Martino Gamper** wrote when he made *100 chairs in 100 days* using a stockpile of abandoned chairs, what could make them unique is that “even the most abject of the remade pieces will have an euphoria inspired by the escape of destiny.”

MAKING EVERYONE A DESIGNER

Above all, designers will also have to turn themselves and their practices into their first project, redesigning themselves. For the fundamental changes that will occur between objects and the people who design, produce, sell and use them, also imply that every one of us will have to become a designer, and that design professionals change their role by primarily becoming facilitators, consultants and stewards that help the consumer in this **Joseph Beuys** inspired emancipation process.

A CULTURE OF SHARING

Designers will have to unlearn the habit of concentrating almost exclusively on objects and products, and certainly of thinking in terms of landmarks and eye-catchers, the next big thing, phoenix products and landmarks that are announced as sweeping changes or paradigm shifts, but are mainly just meant as a glory trip for the designer. The designer's Ego will have to commit suicide in public, while he or she will have to think systems before artifacts, services before products, adopting **John Thackara's** 'Use/Not Own' principles at every step. Products will just be a means, not an end, while our culture will have to be a culture of sharing.

A PREFERENCE FOR THE DISCARDED

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Design will also take into account the 90% that was highlighted by **Ezio Manzini** as the part of our present consumption of raw materials and energy that needs to be cut to make the world sustainable. To compensate for this, it will have a preference for weak, fragile, humble, unappealing and highly unusual materials that are commonly discarded, or which simply no-one else has ever thought of using — chicken wire mesh, packing tape, and papier maché, unveiling the sublime in sand, dust, preserved sheep stomachs, dead birds and moles, or air and shadows that have been hunted and captured.

F A R M W I L L
F A L L A W
F U T I L I T Y

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In architecture, for instance, this *Arte Povera* approach could also express itself in typologies that are impermanent, temporary, cheap, improvised, and exonerated from the oppressive logic of the real-estate market — one of the main challenges being the search for tactics that can make this poverty attractive. Future design may thus be created to be as sustainable and as long lasting as possible, but it may also be ephemeral, perishable, and evanescent, like **Erik Klarenbeek**'s soap bubbles and **Nacho Carbonell**'s sandcastles — or biodegradable, quickly disintegrating into the environment, a perfect metaphor for design's futility. Opposed as these approaches may seem, both will totally ignore the obsolescence principle that is at the heart of the present industry.

SURVIVAL PROPS

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Many of the projects that plead for a more social and critical design, and which that other grand old man of radical design, **Andrea Branzi**, described as “intelligent survival props in post-apocalyptic times,” may have hardly any more use than the cards in the back of airplane seats with instructions in case of catastrophe that serve ex-designer **Marti Guixé** as an inspiration. What they propose may well come far too late, their effect hardly exceeding that of the proverbial drop of water on a hot plate. And yet, if they were to succeed in collaborating and multiplying it might still be coming: a Massive Change!

SHAPING OUR MOST PRIVATE DESIRES

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Apart from social networking, other new tools — such as 3D and *Open Source* production — have placed a most powerful arsenal at the designer's disposal. From *WikiLeaks* to *MP3s*, the emerging paradigms that come with these new digital technologies have already irreversibly transformed the concepts of ownership, authorship, copyright, trade and — ultimately — authenticity, and it is more than likely that this is just the very beginning of an epochal shift in our relationship with things and the way in which the design world is structured. The 3D technique, for instance, which allows users to set up their own production, could do away with the army of middlemen who tend to multiply the cost of distribution, and therefore alone make any form of democratic design impossible. And in a not so distant future the same technique could offer each of us the possibility to turn our personal and digital DIY-produce into vehicles that give shape to our most private desires, fantasies, obsessions, fetishisms, anomalies, and pathologies.

A PSYCHOANALITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PRAXIS 55

Within the same spirit, future designers could happily break the unspoken code of honor that prevents them from referencing and commenting on the dark and disturbing aspects of life, such as war, death, sex, terrorism, paranoia, fear and authority, famine, cruelty and disease, and from challenging taboos and norms. The new design will therefore be a psychoanalytical praxis. And it will also be a philosophical one. Expanding its scope, it will graft itself on to the phenomenology of the object as it was developed by **Martin Heidegger** or **Jean-Paul Sartre**, and on to other thinkers who have been totally ignored by the design world until now, be it only because their criticism included most unusual criteria, such as nausea. It is high time that design starts thinking.

BREEDING
ANIMALI
DOMESTICI

56

Design will also be an emotional praxis. Tomorrow's objects will not be unlike **Andrea Branzi's** *Animali Domestici*, furniture pieces in which he married the natural and primitive to the technologically highly sophisticated, and future to history. While revealing design's schizophrenic character, they were also to function as fetishes and contemplative props for meditation, far beyond the rational, bringing the diffused imagination of 'dormiveglia,' or day-dreaming, into play within us, and establishing an intimate and loving relationship with us, like pets.

A FEELING OF MANDORLA AND MENE TEKEL

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Overtly emotional, future design will not simply speak but cry, whisper, holler, shout and curse. Through its body language, it will express the designer's personality and passions, and arouse our senses and imagination. Some designs will just smuggle themselves into our homes as a disturbing element, causing a subtle feeling of uneasiness. Others will provide us with a feeling of *Mandorla*, a revelation of the sublime. Or they will impose themselves with a compelling narrative. Profoundly human, warm, humble, arrogant or playful, they might not only expose themselves as a metaphor or a Totem, a *Mene Tekel* or *Sign of the Times*, embodying the spirit of a whole era, but also manifest themselves as living organisms that constantly surprise us with their behavior and the stories they have to tell.

ENLARGING THE SCOPE

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Expanding its scope, the new design will also be a science and praxis that focuses on living and the habitat in general, including favela and shacks, and not just on the latest landmarks by famous architects. It will concentrate on clothing, and not just on fashion, let alone haute couture; on food, and not just on gastronomy; on mobility, instead of car culture. Most importantly: it will know that Good Design can never just be a thing, or a thing you do, that it is a way of life, an attitude, giving shape to man's dreams and creating new realities. And its main issue and material will be communities, human beings and their interactions.

WALKING THE THIN LINE BETWEEN UTOPIA AND PRAGMATISM

59

Being all this and so much more, design will refuse to stand for just one ideology. Nor will it be pointing out an absolute answer. It will not be one, but many. Its future will be kaleidoscopic. In its endeavor to become that lucky bastard of old again, it won't be afraid to contradict itself, and go for a dialectics in which it tries to combine opposites, walking the thin line between Utopia and Pragmatism and a great variety of functions and needs that have to be brought to a synthesis in one single thing, even when they seem totally incompatible. Its greatness has always been in the mix. More than ever before, design will keep moving away from what it already knows, and be multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary. It will go viral and scratch culture — removing boundaries with art, and fashion, science, politics and even the most abject forms of popular culture and vernacular. It will strive for a position where it can effortlessly cross-pollinate and combine the talents of a plumber with those of a mystic.

A DYSFUNCTIONAL AND POETICAL PRAXIS

60

Design could especially also strengthen its bonds with art in the way proposed by **Boris Groys**, combining two opposed figures: ‘the dysfunctional artist’ and ‘the comforting designer.’ Like design, modern art was born out of the industrial revolution and the social changes it caused. Both are also subject to its market principles. But different from design, art offers artists the possibility to strike a pose in which they radically refute the status quo and its obligation to adapt to society. Having the advantage of standing much closer to reality than art, and of being therefore also much more effective in its endeavours to interfere in that reality, design could learn from this provocative attitude that makes good art, developing designs that, to quote **Groys**, “may be functional, but that are at the same time unpractical and uncomfortable (...) while frustrating the user, who wonders why the designer created an object that is so difficult to handle.” Instead of being just another way to satisfy shareholders, or answering practical needs, design could thus be a dysfunctional and poetical praxis, bringing the moon on earth.

A MORAL AND SOCIAL PRAKIS

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Design will also take its inspiration from the Social Sculpture **Joseph Beuys** had in mind, taking communities and the human software as its prime material instead of the hardware. It will also be a moral praxis, giving priority to real needs, economical and ecological, global, local, or strictly personal. It will constantly confront us with our political and environmental responsibilities, while insisting on a broad range of existential issues that range from democracy and global and local development, over biotechnologies, to the dematerialization of the object. In its quest for relevance it will be a tool for the reduction of social inequalities. Starting from the idea that a poor person has the right to be every bit as demanding as a wealthy one, it will refuse to remain the thoughtless imitation of what has existed up till now and been created exclusively for an elite in industrially advanced nations.

LIBERATE
62 WILL BE
THE
WATCHWORD

Being primarily a design for the other 90%, the poor and the weak, the marginalized, discarded and neglected, the third and fourth world coming first, tomorrow's design will be a design by, with and for humanity, empowering people. Whether it's consumers or materials, the whole design industry or one simple shape, *liberate* will be the watchword. Most of us have traded freedom for peace of mind. But what we need is Liberation. Design will free the consumers, and it will free the workers of their alienating labor.

PROVOCATIVE & POSITIVE

Design could also learn from the way art succeeds in being provocative and challenging, and at the same time irresistible. For if Social and Critical Design want to stand any chance, they will have to have a positive appeal for the public, and work like a magnet, depressive and tragic as the issues they engage with may be. Scolding today's society and its industrial base for being outmoded, crass and nasty, can only be part of its approach. Also, when working with a community as the main material, drawing attention to a problem by highlighting or putting the emphasis on its often shocking details, and using compromising imagery that treats members of the community like objects of pity, will do little to improve their self-esteem. Instead of focusing on the community's shortcomings, design will have to address its challenges in an uplifting tone.

MEDIATING 64 FANTASIES

More in general, and while also remaining truthful and faithful to its cause, design will have to fascinate and lure the public into action. In order to be effective, it will have to construct and communicate a vision of an alternative twenty-first century industrial base that is elegant, beautiful, refined, and glamorously seductive. It must provide a type of experience that **Martin Amis** has called '*complicated pleasure*,' engaging people through humor, insight, surprise and wonder, and offering a glimpse of what the future could be through what **Anthony Dunne** and **Fiona Raby** describe as '*value fiction*.' Design proposals and objects will not just be here and now, but also over there, in the future. They will offer a design for the mind, mediating fantasies and scenarios, and stimulating reflection and the imagination. Quoting **Dunne** and **Raby**: "The challenge is to blur the boundaries between the real and the fictional, so that the conceptual becomes more real and the real is seen as just one limited possibility among many."

A MYRIAD OF MINOR INTERVENTIONS

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With business hopeless and government stymied, designers will stand pretty lonely in their efforts. They will have to take the lead, and reinvent themselves as a real avant-garde. The problems they have to solve and alleviate are far from new. But never before have these been so big and so urgent. It is also an illusion to think that there will be a magic bullet, a single a-ha moment that could solve even one of these problems with a bang. The obsession for one time and large scale solutions is an addiction that is largely the result of our competitive climate, and has also hobbled us from seeing the most obvious opportunity for improvement — a myriad of minor interventions and implements that try to re-shape our everyday experience and that can have an impact far beyond what is apparent now.

AN OPEN NETWORK

To be really effective, most projects will have to operate on a micro level, grassroots, site-specific, and accessible to everybody. So real change on a global level is much more likely to come from an open network that combines and connects all these projects, big or small, landmark or not, with multiple, self-adjusting and complementary actors aiming for a vision of a loosely defined common set of goals. It will have to be a network that also encompasses all of the areas of design, since no single area is sufficient by itself to drive sustainable social development.

A DIFFUSE MODERNITY

Parallel to the language of the new tools that we have at our disposal, such as the Internet, and in accordance with the non-hierarchical structure of **Deleuze's** *Rhizome*, operating on principles such as heterogeneity, and multiplicity, the network we need will also be organized along 'the diffuse modernity' that **Andrea Branzi**, pleaded for when he stated that classic modernism, with its emphasis on closed, rigid and well-defined form and function, based on a high-tech approach, had not only lost touch with the intimate needs and behavior of users but also with the general needs of a fluid society.

MORPHING LIKE A CLOUD FORMATION

Based on the 'weak energy' that is as well proper to nature as to the electronic revolution that steers our present society, the network we are after will have the openness, softness, weakness, and elegance of a cloud formation, or a flock of birds, taking its strength from the most flexible way in which it can continuously morph into new patterns, guided by a perfect synchronicity and a liquid logic. So hurray and hurray again for the fluid, the graceful and delicate, the translucent and the transitory, light and flexible, the fragile and weak — our guiding principles.

PROBLEM- RAISING

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Rather than solving problems, design will be problem-raising, knowing that even a simple question can be a project in itself, and that a great part of the pleasure will come from the fact that the outcome will always be unknown. And as we all know by now: final solutions, *Endlösungen*, are not to be trusted. As it may not be up to design in general to resolve the large-scale problems of the prevailing social, political or economic order, or to set up the aforementioned network, it can certainly also not be the task of one single project to solve the issue it is working on. It would also be an illusion to think it could do so. But by finding and articulating underlying ideas and implications, critical practices could at least render this issue more accessible to understanding, debate, and change — by raising the problem.

GAINING VIRAL

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The new tools can be very helpful for creating public awareness, offering the elements for a totally new design language, with which a design project gains an influence that reaches far beyond its physical presence, and much further than ever before once it starts to travel as an image or simulacrum on the Internet. One of the main advantages of design over art or architecture has always been the great ease with which it can go viral, small, humble, flexible in multiple copies, spreading like a disease and infiltrating people's homes or offices, often without anybody even noticing. In many languages design's most emblematic category, furniture, was even named after this capacity for going mobile. Social Media could multiply this added value endlessly.

DENSE AND INTENSE

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Whatever the clichés that are told to us about functionalism in history books, added value has always been there. The relationship between object and man could never be simply reduced to purely practical, technical and ergonomic concerns, but was richly infused with symbolic, literary, affective, psychological, historical and social elements that defined its form and working. Even **Louis Sullivan**, to whom the slogan 'Form Follows Function' is attributed, was referencing the natural and organic and not the strictly rational and utilitarian when he used it. In the new design language this richness in meaning will become far more dense and intense.

DESIGN

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FOR THE MIND

On the one hand, the purely functional relevance of a design project will gain in significance — be it only because it will answer real needs, and a water filter that saves hundreds of thousands of lives is slightly more essential than the umpteenth table or chair. On the other hand, the new tools which designers will have at their disposal will also offer the possibility to boost the symbolic and metaphorical power of that very same design — enhancing a design's ability as a sign or image that goes viral, as an interface or catalyst, a leveler for social change and debate, a Storyteller, and an Object for the Mind (see above). So powerful will this added value be with the dominance of the virtual over the physical that design will primarily become a *Sign* — and even a chair will do much more good to the head than to the bottom.

FAVORING MORE WORTHY PURSUITS

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There may also be no Holy Grail for social and community-based design, but there are already some indications that successful projects have at least some elements in common, exploiting these communication tools to the full. The use of documentary films is one of them, combining the critical with the self-promoting — to such a degree, even, that one might well speak of a new genre. The intense use of *Information Visualization* in their graphic campaign is another. While today's production in graphic design still largely consists of product marketing, brand development, and advertising, the recent outburst of interest in *Information Visualization* is probably the most conspicuous indication of a growing discomfort with the reductive and immeasurably harmful code of public discourse that resulted, and of the fact that a mind shift and reversal of priorities is finding more and more supporters in favor of more worthy pursuits and democratic forms of communication.

CHALLENGING POWER

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Expressing itself in charts, maps and diagrams, reference books, such as atlases and catalogues, calendars, notices, instruction forms and signs, plans and pictographic systems — *Information Visualization* is defined by **Ben Shneiderman**, **Stuart K. Card** and **Jock D. Mackinlay** as “the use of computer-supported, interactive, visual representations of abstract data to amplify cognition.” Primarily meant as a discovery and advocacy tool, visualization not only facilitates understanding but also the analysis of the data, enabling users to investigate and reshape the layout in order to find appropriate answers to their questions. And it doesn’t just interpret or help us to navigate the world, it also seeks to actively intervene in it, challenging power through disruption, strengthening individuals and communities, and building awareness and capacity.

A POLITICAL PRAXIS

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Can we not be political as designers? Can we still argue: 'I'm not into politics' and stay neutral? No, we can't. Every design artifact is a profoundly social construction and an ideological statement. Design for Design's sake that reduces itself to mere style or decoration, matter or technique, only camouflages the governing system and power game that made it possible. There is no such thing as Splendid Isolation. And that also goes for users: when we surf the Internet, we participate in a system of rights governing speech and access to information; when we obey traffic rules, we subscribe to laws controlling movement. Street signs, copyright marks, user guides and legal disclaimers — to name only the most obvious — are nothing but political protocols. So we might as well make clear which side we are on.

A SUBVERSIVE PRAKIS 76

Designers will have to turn from agents of capitalism into agents provocateurs and social (h)activists if they want to make their design work. If not, their design will be little more than a legitimization of the ruling apparatus — a system that is subject to both industrial and social limits, beyond which lie only environmental disaster and dysfunctional forms of coexistence. Since communities and digital information will be at the core of the design process, they will, for instance, have to engage in a struggle to guarantee that all people have fair and equitable access to communication channels, independent of governmental or commercial control, in a language they normally use and understand, and free from any surveillance and intrusion. Design will only be able to flourish in a democracy as a subversive praxis.

COLLABORATING WITH THE CORPORATE

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Future design will equally be a matter of dialogue and dialectics, and a collaborative praxis — with a wide array of partners, reaching from underserved communities to the ruling industry. Collaboration with the latter will be essential. It is an illusion to think that it might be possible to return to a situation where production is mainly in the hands of craftspeople on a cottage level. We will depend, for the largest part, on the existing industry, which the current crisis is already prompting to rapid reconversion. Knowing that real change can only happen within this context, designers will fully support these efforts.

UTOPIAN, BUT NOT NAIVE

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Faithful to their bastard nature, designers won't be afraid to get their hands dirty and to translate their ideas into mass-produced commercial products, or to get on-board with big corporations. For Foco design may well be utopian, and speak in 'pipe dreams' like **Jerszy Seymour**, but it won't be naive. It will fully accept that there is no escape from a society in which everything — from food to communication — is subject to the laws of consumerism, and that the artificial is the only natural environment left. Nostalgic ideas about a return to nature or the primitive life of yore will be declared obsolete. Who knows: the perfect storm of social awareness, corporate interest, and technological advancement that results might even become the single most significant movement of our generation.

MAKING TROUBLE

The fact that designers will be willing to collaborate with the ruling industry doesn't mean that they will have to submit to its regulatory regime. On the contrary, they will avoid recuperation or being co-opted by the commercial market, always keeping their eyes wide open for cracks in their system that might allow changing it from within. As **Tibor Kalman** said: "Good designers make trouble." They will defy and fuck the rules, as long as they have a good reason to do so. And they will confront controversy, even when you work at the service of a community. Democracy can only function when based on conflict dynamics.

CONFRONTING 80 CONTRAVERSITY

Community engagement and the social problems it engages with are as complex as the sum of its members. Despite their commonality, they often represent a wide range of opposing perceptions, interests, enterprises, and ways of interacting. This great variety is often the biggest obstacle for designers who want to help, especially since projects in the social field are particularly prone to deal with controversial subject matter. It happens all too often that a community, overly protective of certain topics or ashamed by the nature of its problems, may not want to talk about them. In this case, designers will have to address these controversial issues head on, and to create conflict, avoiding quick solutions by just giving community members what they want. But in order to maintain a good rapport with the target audience, the job will have to be done with taste and playfulness, taking small steps instead of initiating a culture shock.

NOT RELYING ON TECHNOLOGY

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Within the same dialectics, our scenarios will also be mixing the low-tech of traditional crafts with high-tech and the latest and most advanced technology, transferring the human heartbeat to an inanimate object, for instance. But future design won't rely too much on technology. Too often, technology hinders rather than helps, and we won't forget that it is largely responsible for where we are now. Creativity is not device-dependent, and great liberty exists when we avoid trying to run with the technological pack. Too many appliances and pieces of furniture have also been entering our homes and offices as extraneous presences, technical instruments devoid of grace and valued only for their looks and utility.

A PARTICIPATORY PRAKIS 82

When communities are the main material, in developing countries, for instance, design will absorb and exploit the latest that technology can make available to it, but only when it can offer local answers to local needs, increasing local productivity and income, as well as self-reliance and democracy. In most cases the result should therefore be a technology and infrastructure that is simple, inexpensive, easy to maintain, and that allows popular participation.

ALWAYS TAKING RISKS

The industry and its operations also have a tendency to avoid any risks, and to reinforce success. Design will resist this. It will decline the corporate profitability and rising state indebtedness that of late have decreased spending in Europe on R&D to such a degree that even European Union research commissioner **Máire Geoghegan-Quinn** recently warned of an ‘innovation emergency.’ Welcoming No_Function and No_Fear, design will explore the edge that separates us from new realities. It will always be careful to take risks. Big risks. It will deliberately ignore disciplinary boundaries and other attempts to control creative life. As a designer: break your design, stretch it, bend it, crush it, and crack it — just for the childish pleasure of seeing if what you throw against the wall sticks. Be a **Situationist**: *détournement* will be a major tactic.

WANDERING AIMLESSLY

Prioritize process. Allow yourself to drift and wander aimlessly, in a **Situationist** manner, *à la derive*, constantly on the move. Travel light, and dwell in the periphery. Jump fences and cross the fields, working from the idea that nothing is ever final, everything has to remain open-ended, and real growth often happens outside of where we intend it to happen, in the interstitial or in-between spaces, un-used, under-used or misused, the wastelands, the urban voids, and leftovers. See chance and surprise as allies. Capture accidents. Good design is always about unplanned usages and unintended consequences.

FARM WILL

FOLLOW

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FAILURE

Don't be afraid of asking stupid questions or questions that may not have answers. He who is ashamed of asking is afraid of learning. Keep what **Bruce Mau** said in mind: "The wrong answer is the right answer in search of a different question." Designers will collect wrong answers as part of their design process, constantly on the search for questions that might fit to them. Let Form follow Failure on a daily bases. Learn at the rate of an infant, fueled by desire and innocence.

BE A BRICOLEUR

Social Design will be there while you wait, improvised, spontaneous, and immediate. The tactics will also be like **Michel de Certeau** described them in *The Practice of Everyday Life*: very *Ad-Hoc*, improvising, contingent upon local circumstances or particular moments in time, taking advantage of opportunities and cracks in the system. The designer will be a *bricoleur*, in the sense that **Jacques Derrida** used the word to describe a resourceful use of materials at hand, and **de Certeau**, to describe the politics of *making do*. When working with a community, be prepared to give up at least a certain amount of control, and let your design have the openness and the willingness to be changed by community members. Let them know at the beginning of the project that you follow a process that may lead to a solution that is totally unexpected.

BE AN

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AMATEUR

Refuse to be pushed into the isolated role of an expert. An expert is all too often misused as an Agent of Authority. Real professionals always keep an open amateur approach. Don't let yourself be scared off by the fact that you might not be up to the task. Remember what **Paula Scher** said: "When you're totally unqualified for a job, that's when you do your best work." Being an inexperienced outsider makes you see things that the insiders don't. When it seems everything has been done already, look at the problem sideways or upside down. It can be most helpful to think about an idea from a perspective that makes no sense at all. To hell with logic.

LAUGH AT PERFECTION

Take inspiration from the likes of **Peter Sellers**, countering your radicalism and despair by self-mockery and a liberating force that keeps eliciting bursts of laughter. Play, laugh, and do not be afraid to be laughable. As **Bruno Taut** wrote: “Away with the sourpusses, the wailing Willies, the sobersides, the brow furrowers, the eternally serious, the sweet-sour ones, the forever important!” Down with respectability. And death to everything that hides behind title, dignity or authority! Laugh at perfection. It’s boring. Celebrate the beauty of imperfection.

CURE YOUR ALZHEIMER 89 DISEASE

Get rid of the tunnel vision that only focuses on the here and now and tomorrow. Design is not just urgently in need of a long-term approach, but also has to be cured of its Alzheimer disease. Growth is only possible as a product of a historical perspective that, to use an expression of **Reyner Banham's**: memory helps us “understand how we became what we are today.” Brandishing **Paul Ricoeur's** paradox “how to become modern and to return to sources”, design will go on the search for its memory. It will trace its historical precedents, in modernism, the counter-culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the anti-design and radical design movements, or in vernacular architecture and local culture — all marginalized by history writing.

DON'T
BEHIND

Free yourself from a series of other notions that rule the present time frame in design: such as speed, trends, fashion, originality, and progress — all words that are little more than a synonym for obsolescence. Slow down. Refuse to be Cool or Hip. Don't even try to be fashionable. And don't be original but authentic. Oppose revolution to perpetual change.

DON'T BE A UFO

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With communities being the major clients, design will also be an anthropological praxis. Designers will try to immerse themselves as much as possible in the community, to accurately understand its needs, and to identify its strengths. But since Social Design is a democratic process, in which there is no us and no them, it will also be more. It will break down the borders between the designer and the client. So don't be a UFO. Sometimes you may need to fade into the background and observe, while at other times you might need to work side by side with members of the community, to experience firsthand their lives and environment. An exploited community is often rightly skeptical of the efforts of outsiders. Find ways to bond strong relationships with community members. Show that you take them seriously and truly care by engaging them as partners throughout the design process. Build empathy. Build trust.

DESIGN WITH THE COMMUNITY'S VOICE 92

While the community may need your fresh perspective in order to break with its past, and other confines, your design also needs to connect to the style of your target audience. So go for a careful balance. Utilize local resources, and design with the community's voice. Identify assets in the community, such as established infrastructure and services or unique skills or resources that you can build on. Determine what local material resources are plentiful and available, and learn what skills or talents community members can contribute. Craft your design also in a way that focuses on the attitudes, consumption patterns and traditions prevalent within the community. Make sure it connects to the community's style and doesn't just reflect your own aesthetics. Research what colors, typefaces, and other style elements are prevalent in the community, and take inspiration from them. And adapt your design to feedback from community members throughout the design process.

GRASSROOTS AND BOTTOM-UP 93

As **Lao Tzu** said: “Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime.” Working with and for a community also means that the final aim is to empower that community by giving it ownership over the project, so that it can run and when necessary modify the project as much as possible after the initial goals have been reached, using local materials, and its own funding, machinery park, and methods. A project should therefore be conceived at a grassroots level and bottom-up, as opposed to having solutions designed top-down that merely assume the community’s needs and impose solutions. The community should be involved from the beginning in the design process, while the designers choose a form that can be easily duplicated or implemented. Part of the job is also to provide clear instructions along with thorough training, so that the project continues to evolve after the designer has gone.

AD-HOC AND FREEWHEELING 94

Not just design education but the whole education system need a total rethinking — providing anyone with the necessary social capital to become a designer. Since design comprises nearly anything, design education should not limit itself to high-school and professionals, but start at kindergarten, as a course that stands central to all fields of study. Students could not just be educated into Social Stewards on a theoretical level, by getting an overview of the problems design has to deal with, globally and locally, and from potable water scarcity to street art and urbanism. In workshops and labs they could also gain insight into the secret workings of objects and systems, and be taught techniques on a more practical level, including the *Ad-Hoc* and free-wheeling, or the there-while-you-wait and with-what-is-at-hand. Gardening and its many contemporary variants, such as urban and guerilla gardening, to mention just one discipline, should be part of any educational program, next to up-cycling, hacking, 3D production, and a pleiad of other social tactics.

REVOLUTIONIZING DESIGN INSTITUTIONS 95

Since most social and critical design projects operate on a micro-level, and are mostly self-initiated, non-commissioned, and self- and therefore underfunded, or working for underfunded communities, the support of professional design organizations and local authorities will be vital in getting these projects going. Instead of being a promotional tool at the service of the local design scene or industry, these organizations, associations and civil services should be the first to transform themselves totally in Think Tanks and coordinators in the *Rhizome*-structure networks that could also help the projects to reach an audience on a macro-level. Every comment and all advice written in this booklet is also applicable to them, as well as to the media, museums, design centers and fair organizers. As long as the latter limit their role to showing the latest novelties or landmarks, in glossy magazines, sealed in display cases or placed atop pedestals, and invariably in splendid isolation, their responsibility remains overwhelming.

DEVELOPING A GREATEST COMMON DIVISOR 96

Design never starts with a blank slate. Since Social Design is almost by definition site-specific and community based, and these parameters are different for and unique to each project, it is impossible and even dangerous to come up with a set of recipes that might be universally applicable. Apart from adapting to the local infrastructure, resources, skills, talents, attitudes and rituals of the community and its members, each project constantly has to reposition itself in a large series of dichotomies that define its dialectics, going from global versus local, and utopia versus pragmatic, over top-down versus bottom-up, and serial products versus one-offs, to high- versus low-tech, hand-made versus industrially-produced goods etc. As a project will never entirely be Utopian, or pragmatic, or low-tech or high-tech, in each of these dichotomies, projects will always be balancing in-between both extremes, in search of a compromise. The continuously changing diagram drawn by these dichotomies and compromises will be different for each project, and make its uniqueness. Yet at the same time such a diagram might also help in constructing a greatest common divisor that could serve as a basic tool to further describe and analyze the common elements that connect these projects, and their differences.

SOIL TESTING

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As we have hopefully also made clear in this booklet: there are already some other common elements discernable in this still emerging and extremely heterogeneous and hard-to-catch group of projects, that — together with these dichotomies — might allow us to speak of the birth of an entirely new language with its own grammar and vocabulary. As the loose structure of the *Songlines* collected in this booklet shows, it has never been its intention to provide a detailed description of this language, which is still very young and in the making. While opting for the formula of a notebook, which comes pretty close to the non-hierarchical rhizome-structure that also characterizes the field of social and critical design, we just wanted to do some initial soil testing.

BY WAY OF AN OUTRO:

The scale, number, and span of these tests were far too small to come to any final conclusions at all. Nevertheless, here is a small summary of the ideas that popped up while writing this Cahier:

If humanity still wants to survive at all, even in a very near future, we will urgently and radically have to stop the way in which mankind is destroying its environment, and itself, through its industry. Design, which is just another word for the field that encompasses all our Tools for Living, from objects to systems, and which has, until now, chosen to be almost exclusively at the service of industry, will have to enlarge its scope in such a way that it takes the global context as much as possible as its framework when developing a project. And therefore also the natural environment and future generations, and not just the interests of a single target group, such as the corporate industry.

LISTEN TO THE COMMANDANTE

Instead of being mainly a commercial praxis, design will first and foremost have to become a moral, social, political, poetical, philosophical, artistic, and emotional one. It will also be a dysfunctional praxis whenever necessary, whereby we will no longer have to accept being reduced to consumers or users. Since design is God and God is in the detail, it will primarily focus on all that has been neglected by a globalizing industry and its standardized politics, the weak, the fragile, the volatile, and the poor. Taking humans and their communities as its main material, it will insist on working on a micro level. And rather than following Finance and Function, it will follow Foco, **Che Guevara's** belief that a small group of dedicated men can set off a revolution based on a hit and run guerilla strategy, exploiting the cracks in the system. Of late, new tools, such as the Social Media, have popped up that have the capacity to turn the Commandante's theory into reality.

M A L E

S O U R

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A S S

Tomorrow's Crisis design will drift, take risks, favoring failures and accidents. Above all, the new tools will allow the projects to cooperate and organize themselves along a system or network that makes it possible to work simultaneously on a micro and on a macro level, and to handle global problems in a global manner. Non-hierarchical, the structure of this network will come close to that of the Internet, a cloud formation, a flock of birds that fluently moves from one pattern of synchronicity into the other, or **Gilles Deleuze's** *Rhizome*, organic, 'weak', flexible, and open. Moving its ass, drifting, and bringing opposites, such as micro and macro or local and global, to a synthesis, design will declare the principles that kept the old industry going, such as ceaseless innovation- and obsolescence, outdated and obsolete. Developing more and more into a sign, with meanings on all levels imaginable that spread over the network, design will above all be a dialectic process that allows everyone to become a designer, and forces the professional designers of old into a fundamentally new role that holds the middle between facilitator, servant, consultant, steward, catalyzer, agitator, and guerilla fighter. Instead of the lethal objects of desire of old, which proved to be little more than 'formes fatales'. A permanent revolution will be their ultimate goal, and *liberate* the password.

Max Borka — Berlin-Vienna, September 2013

MAX BORKA

was born in Belgium in 1954.

He currently lives and works in Berlin. He has been working as a journalist, critic, consultant, lecturer and tutor, and as a writer and curator of numerous books and exhibitions in the field of art, architecture, fashion and design, such as *Nullpunkt*, *Nieuwe German Gestaltung* and *Spagat*, *Design Istanbul Tasarimi*, both at the *MARTa Herford* museum in Germany, *Thus Spoke The Marble* in Milan, Italy, and *Istanbul Alphabet* at *The Museum der Dinge* in Berlin, an exhibition for which *Walking Chair* developed the graphic design. He also wrote the catalogue for the *Totem and Taboo* exhibition at the *MuseumsQuartier* in Vienna. He was the director of the *Interieur Foundation* and — *Biennial*, one of the world's leading design events, in Kortrijk, Belgium, and artistic director of *designbrussels* in Brussels. Max Borka was also the founder and first editor in chief of *DAMn° magazine*, and recently launched *Mapping the Design World*, a project that has set itself the aim of researching and promoting more social typologies of design on a worldwide level. He recently taught design history and theory at *La Cambre, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Visuels* in Brussels, and *the School of Arts/Royal Academy of Arts, KASK*, in Ghent, both in Belgium, and at the *Fachhochschule Potsdam* in Germany.