

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Whereas for decades design used to have a modest existence on the fringes of academically approved disciplines, today the term “design” enjoys an astonishing diversity of meanings, referring not so much to new types of artifacts -in the anthropological sense- but to the way design is approached: Emotional Design/ Experience Design/ Transactional Design/ Transformational Design/ Critical Design/ Socially Responsible Design/ Inclusive Design/ Speculative Design/ Participatory Design/ Green Design/ Human-Centered Design/ Eco-design / Intelligent Design/ Immaterial Design/ Decolonial Design/ Counterhegemonic Design/ Anticipatory Design / Cognitive Design/ Author Design.

On the one hand, this growing diversity could be considered a sign of vitality and dynamism. However, it also reinforces a concern, as design as a field with its own identity can be undermined and diluted, to the point where everything can be called “design” - which would not be a problem, if one does not forget the essence of design, which is the PROJECT, that is, actual intervention in reality.

How can the variety of approaches to design be explained? Is it merely a fleeting phenomenon or does it have deeper significance? For years, the term “design” was confined to a minimal role at best and was primarily associated with aesthetic appeal of “beautiful objects”. The social and cultural sciences seem to be particularly attracted by the aura of “design”.

One reason for the emergence of new types of design approaches could be related

to the limitations and contradictions of design practice and teaching in the global market. One of the driving forces of design is the desire to create ecologically and socially viable systems, and the conviction that design can be a socially relevant activity, which means going beyond what is promoted by think tanks as dominant discourse-shapers, that is, doctrine factories.

Two types of design can be differentiated: Needs driven design in contrast to market-driven design. The political dimension of projects does not arise from an individual engagé attitude, but from a broad political-social process that supports this practice. Subjective sensitivity plays, at best, a secondary role.

Sometimes, these aspirations for a design project with social significance are explicitly stated: How can design bring about change in society? Clearly, such an ambitious question risks overburdening the discipline with disproportionate expectations and thus limiting itself to verbal statements and manifestos. Today, the place once occupied by great narratives is filled with what we might call micro-narratives (and even small talk in social media chats). Professions are immersed in stories about what they are. They evolve and are exposed to contradictions. And more importantly, they create a reality (rather than just reflecting it). In this dynamic of narratives, discourses gain and lose relevance.

Including design in a political agenda can lend itself to misunderstandings, for example, by equating political-social interest with a committed position within the framework of programmatic ideas in the form of a hegemonic doctrine, running the risk of essentialist fundamentalism. Rather, design can be understood as a mediating force between public and private interests. This was the proposal, for example, of the well-known designer Jan van Toorn. He carried out his duties as a professional and educator in opposition to authoritarian trends that threaten democratic traditions and their unfulfilled commitment to

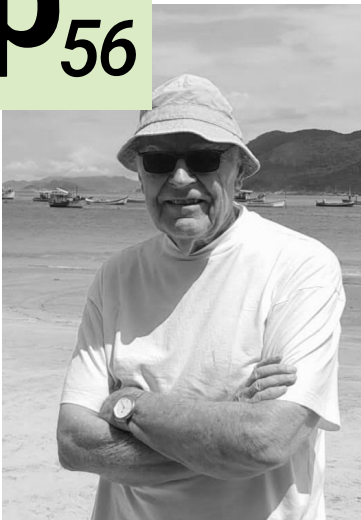
participation and liberation. Despite the challenges, particularly against the formidable influence of corporate power and the commercialization of design as a promotional tool, he was able to preserve the belief in a self-directed practice and tradition of design.

Understanding the political dimension of the design discourse as the sphere in which the dialectic dynamics between power and emancipation unfolds, the current period has been labeled as post-utopian in frank opposition to the modern project. The primary driving force behind modernity was the confidence in the potential of comprehensive development, encompassing social, industrial, technological, economic, cultural, and scientific progress, with the aim of improving the human condition. Already six decades ago In the late 1960s, Tomás Maldonado emphasized the need for ecological considerations to be integrated into design education and professional practice, a programmatic stance that remains relevant to this day. The readiness to consider how change existing social relations remains not only desirable, but necessary.

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