THE CHALLENGE OF BEING ACTIVIST-DESIGNER. An attempt to understand the New Role of Designer in the Social change based on current experiences

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Abstract: As the role of design has been expanding over the time, responsibility and area of influence of designers in confronting with society has also been changing. In this atmosphere, the human attitude of the Designer, User, and Stakeholders interaction is facing a new horizon. This new horizon includes the role of designers as advocates of design in the society; designers who characterize themselves as mere "servant problem solvers" or "service providers", but as design activists. The activist designer first of all is a thinker, who observes, analyses and reacts by design. Its reaction is a confrontation with society which can be a product, service or a political, social or cultural action for a specific influence. This paper believes in the necessity of activist designers in the future of societies and aims at gaining a better understanding of how the activist designer can effectively work and interact within the above mentioned the human attitude in reacting to social and political problems; Problems that often need a quick and good working solution for all the parties in order to have a real and effective impact on the situation. Otherwise the design work (the message) could disappear before reaching the audience or in some cases even seriously endanger the activist designer or involved users. The research question will be approached by conducting a multiple case study analysing the design activism challenge in some significant cases of the last few years in different contexts and conditions such as in Egypt, Iran, Sweden and Palestine.

Keywords: Design Activism, Designer Responsibility, Activist-Designer, Designer-Society Interaction, Case Studies
1. Introduction

The main idea of this paper is inspired by changes that were happened during the last six years in Arab countries called Arab Spring. These changes and movements happened to pursue democracy in these countries; although the result of many of them was not democracy. Tunisia political and social situation changed peacefully, Egypt was changed by a Semi-revolution and some another MENA area countries such as Libya and Syria were collapsed in pit of violence; As for just three years, about 260,000 people were killed totally in these two countries\(^1\). These happenings are continued so far by appearance of ISIL and tragedies that are objective evidence of crimes against humanity.

Nonetheless, in the middle of these happening, we can observe acts of design through peoples expressions of change in the course of revolution that brings many questions again to mind; what is the role of design in this space? Is it nothing? Alternatively, what is the role of designer in this situation? What can be a meaningful action that the designer do in this atmosphere, Is just an action or designing?

Victor Papanek in 1972\(^2\) in his famous work *Design for the Real World* emphasized that the prime function of the designer was to solve problems (Papanek, 1972). However, he also claimed that industrial design differs from its sister arts of architecture and engineering. Where architects and engineers are hired to solve problems, industrial designers were often hired to create new ones (Papanek, 1972).

Years later, The Design historian John Heskett (2002) asked an important question whether designers are merely technocrats, devoting their skills to the highest commercial bidder without considerations of the ends they serve, or is there a dimension of social and environmental purpose requiring acknowledgement in their work? (Heskett, 2002) In the other words, He believes designers typically view themselves, and others view them, as commercial actors. Designers are trained to respond to clients and consumers, and to add value to businesses (Dormer 1993; Heskett 2002). Governments develop policies that position design as a tool of economic growth (Heskett 2002). In addition, Professional design associations largely concern themselves with business practices and responsibilities to clients (Thorpe, 2007). Even design schools tend to frame their work as educating employees for the "creative industries" rather than as educating change agents.

In the summer of 2012, Prof. Donald Norman In an interview\(^3\) emphasized some interesting and important points on design. Norman was asked about his opinion about three suggested steps of change in the concept of design through history. From "Solution Manual" or "Problem Solver" to an economic solution for not bankrupt in the second period, to now, at its peak, design as something even more than past in terms of areas of solutions it can offer. The answer of Norman was interesting. He said: "Sorry. I have great difficulty in understanding this question. It seems to be a different history of design than I believe has happened. Perhaps you are speaking of a different kind of designer, perhaps someone in "Engineering Design." Engineering Design is a very different discipline. It is primarily concerned with efficiency and optimization. It is an important area, but it has never understood how to treat the person in system where people and machines had to

\(^1\) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libyan_Civil_War And http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War
\(^2\) The book was first published in Sweden in 1970 and then in German in 1972 as *Papanek-Konzept. Design für eine Umwelt des Überlebens* (Nemphenburger Verlagsbuchhandlung, München) before it was published in English in 1972.
\(^3\) In an interview with Maziar Rezai.
interact." (Rezai, 2015) And that’s exactly what we’re looking for in design: treatment and interaction.

We find Design as treatment and interaction with things, environments and processes for some goal good basis to start the discussion of our view on act of design and design activism.

2. Literature Review

Papanek’s Design for the Real World (1972) quickly became the bible of the responsible design movement, and Papanek himself became a leader to the dissatisfied or disaffected in design practices (Whiteley, 1997). In this book, he expressed the concept of social responsible design. With this concept, the societal and moral responsibility of the designer was broadened to encompass also the underdeveloped countries and others in need, and produce development was to be made such that is strained the world resources as little as possible (Papanek, 1972). Criticism was raised against what was defined as 'market-led design' and designers started re-asking ethical questions. Design was no longer referred to as being a basis for solving the society’s problems. On the contrary, designers started to view design, and particularly "market-led" or "consumer-led" design, as part of the problem (Whitely, 1997). Nigel Whitely in Design for Society propounds a question that if design would be a person, would it be a 'mature adult taking responsibility for its actions' or a 'whining adolescent, insecure and struggling to come to terms with the outside world' and argued for the latter being the case.

Therefore, many designers wanted to save the world by their own actions – and considered themselves strongly responsible for the developments around them. The designers wanted to solve every problem from abortion to the Vietnam War and to abandon design for profit (Heislinger & Marcus, 1993). The old form follows function or fitness for purpose slogan was changed to fitness for need at the Design and Industries association in 1975 (ibid.) The designers also saw themselves opposing to large corporations, which were seen as capitalist exploiters – a rather double-faced approach considering that the designers were simultaneously employed by the same companies.

In 2008, Ann Thorpe looked the matter from a new angle in a paper. She said that Activism starts when groups within society call for change, and society responds – either resisting, or incorporating the values encapsulated by activism. (Thorpe, 2008) "I define activism as taking intentional action to instigate change on behalf of a neglected group". And with make a relation between designers and activists, continued:" Designers are working across a range groups and issues, ranging from victims of war or disaster to minority groups." (Thorpe, 2008) In fact, the picture that she presents, tells us that interest in public service design and design activism has been rising, yet in conversation it is also common to hear the suggestion that since most design seeks to improve the conditions of life for people, most of it must, in some senses, be activism. This argument is sometimes bolstered by the idea that architecture, in particular, has long been influenced by arts and intellectual movements, such as modernism, that contain ideas about a better society. (Thorpe, 2010)

This image makes a new horizon to look at the concept of design. But, this new vision is completely affected by activism. Especially where Thorpe concludes that drawing on concepts of activism from social movement research and conventional activist practice, we can formulate a more useful, robust
characterization of design as activism. (Thorpe, 2010) She believes this definition helps designers and social movement actors gain a better understanding of the spatial and material possibilities of design’s role in activism, but she forgot that Formulation or blind copying will kill the creativity in design and is contrast to the design identity; particularly when this formulation is in process. It’s clear that design is a creative process; as activism is a dynamic process and a good pattern for design; of course not to imitate, but to follow.

3. Act Of Design

3.1. Design Activism

Design and invention come together – invention is the process of inventing a principle and design is the process of applying that principle. Design has also been defined as the process of converting an idea into information from which a product can be made, as an iterative process that takes an idea or market need forward into a successful product (Hollins & Pugh, 1990), or as a basic methodology, a kind of état d’esprit⁴ which determines, pervades and controls the whole innovation process, often questioning many of the other functions in a company (Aubert, 1985). In this regard, Design in itself, in Herbert Simon’s words (1969), is always about "courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones," and we would like to add this is the case no matter what ideology, content or orientation it takes. This means that designers should see the world as something that can be changed by their act. At the same time, things are always subject to change in one direction or another with or without designers’ presence. This is what Keshavarz calls "material articulations". (Keshavarz, 2015)

The "material" in material articulations insists on the artifice of things. The artifice of things affirms that things for the simple reason that they are made can be unmade and remade accordingly. But in fact, and above all, it states that change is the only possible condition for artifice. The materiality of articulation affirms the possibility of change, reformation, redesigning, reassembling, remaking and undoing in one way or another. Compare to the Society, you will face many unpredictable complexities for making any change. However, in the natural interaction between the society and the designed thing we become (often passive) observers of change in both directions.

"Articulations" refer to the importance of decision, orientation, direction and negotiation in design actions. Samer Akkach (2003) points this out by drawing on the Arabic word chosen for design:

"Tasmim" (تصميم) (design)... [In] current usage, however, seems to be based on tasmim as 'determining,' 'making up one’s mind' and 'resolve' to follow up a matter. Thus in linguistic terms ‘design’ is an act of determination, of sorting out possibilities, and of projecting a choice. It has little to do with problem-solving [as main concept of design in a period of history], the prevailing paradigm, as the designer (musammim/مصمم) seems to encounter choices, not problems, and to engage in judging merits, not solving problems. It is closer to active 'decision-maker' "who makes decision to influence changes in specific directions.

⁴ State of Mind
The modern use of the term "tasmim" in the Arabic speaking world reveals the directionality that design actions always have to take. This is quite the opposite to western-oriented education on design, where design often is a set of skills, techniques and qualities to solve a problem, a seemingly innocent term that refers to making things better in general. To think of designed things and design actions as material articulations tells us that design should be considered as a decision and direction embodied in all things humans bring into being. Design is conditioned by its orientations, directions and capacities, while at the same time conditioning human beings, things and the world. Design articulates possible conditions through materialities.

3.2. Act of Design: Design beyond Design

It is common to refer to design as an act of packaging certain instructions, desires, identities, and so forth. In its modern use, the term design is often can be associated with market, innovation and consumption. Such "associations and assumptions happen in a material world where the designed thing, as an outcome of the skills and mastery of its designer(s) through manipulation and operation within the artifice, is programmed to do what a triangle of customer, client and designer plan directly or indirectly. Such planning might be connected to a variety of purposes, such as to sell, to experience, to seduce, to convey, to persuade, to impose, and so on". (Keshavarz, 2015) But, the professionalization of designers as mere "servant problem solvers" or "service providers" prevents most within the discipline from characterizing themselves as "activists" or advocates, even if that is what they are.

Design is connected with material articulations is always shared with other material entities within an environment. The appearance of any design activity is already changing the environment that designed thing is set to function in it. The concern – that is often overlooked by designers – is that no designed thing is isolated in the world by only being registered and functioning in a particular environment. Design is not and cannot be only a "service provider" despite its intentions. Design is always something more than services. Considering design as "service provider" and building critiques on such an assumption perhaps is the perspective of those who are only affected by design as a service and not, for instance, as a policing force or hostility device. Once a chair is designed, it might be considered as an artefact providing a particular service to its users and consumers. However, we know, it is always more than that. The designed chair has already performed some sort of designation because it has manipulated the environment by the resources it has used, the skills that were used, and the labour that was invested, and so on. The chair and the shape of it "is not the shape of the skeleton, the shape of body weight, nor even the shape of pain-perceived, but the shape of perceived pain wished-gone. The chair is therefore the materialized structure of a perception. It is sentient awareness materialized into a freestanding design". (Scarry, 1985,p.290).

This ontological condition of design points out that "Frames of Mind" embedded in the chair (the thing) is not enacted merely in the office, living room or kitchen by its use and function. Rather, the chair is spatially and temporally embedded and oriented in the "Frames of Mind" of before, during and after design, which change the way a chair is understood and applied. This means that it is almost impossible to think of the space and time of design in a limited sense of the place and the
time of use. The capabilities of wood, skills, labour, workshop as a site of production to be assembled in various ways and the possibilities of the designed chair to be oriented towards one direction and not the other, giving certain shapes to space in which some bodies can occupy and some cannot (Ahmed, 2006) tell us about the complexities and difficulties that design and its internal relation to "Frames of Mind" are involved in. Thus, design is not merely an outcome of environments but also a source of production of environments. Sometimes one is stronger than the other, but this mutual relation is always at place. Adrian Forty puts this clearly in Objects of Desire (1995) when he argues that design influences how we think, and he adds that "it can cast ideas about who we are and how we should behave into permanent and tangible forms" (p.6).

One of the reasons that such assumptions in design discourse appear constantly is the lack of reflection on two separate, and at the same time overlapping, uses of the term design: "the designed thing and the design actions and activities. The latter can be understood both as the act and activity of designing and also as the actions and activities flowing from the designed thing. They are used and discussed interchangeably without much discussion on their differences, on what they do, what capacities they have and how they move from one environment to another." (Keshavarz, 2015)

To unfold the mentioned complexities and confusion involved in the term and act of designing, one can describes the word design as the multiple shifting between the status of something that has happened (Something has been designed and manufactured: separation between the intellectual and technical labour) and the active sense of it as patterning and shaping the world in complex ways.

It is in the latter part of the meaning that Ben Highmore (2009) defines design "as a series of negotiations, as an orchestration (of sense, of perception and so on), as an orientation (something that encourages and generates propensities and proclivities), as an assemblage (and as an assembling activity, where it is always possible that combinations themselves combine), as an arrangement (a temporary coming together) and so on" (p.4).

This understanding of design then is entangled with an active environment where design takes shape and participates in ecological, social, cultural, political and economic contexts. Therefore, design in this sense can play the role of distributing the senses and values, partitioning the divisions in society from desires to labour and consuming behaviours. When, for instance, Jacques Rancière talks about design as an activity of configuration of divisions of communal space, he (Rancière, 2007) means the same:

"By drawing lines, arranging words or distributing surfaces, one also designs divisions of communal space. It is the way in which, by assembling words or forms, people define not merely various forms of art, but certain configurations of what can be seen and what can be thought, certain forms of inhabiting the material world." (p.91)

Therefore, design beyond an icon, symbol, identity, profession or finished product{or Design(a new understanding) beyond Design(with old understanding)} is a certain form of acting in the world that distributes, configures and arranges social actions, sensual perceptions and forms of being together or being apart. The necessity to know and understand design as an internally political/cultural/social
action and attempts to orient its capacities towards certain directions is what the task of design, which is concerned with possible political/cultural/social forms, could be.

In this way, design action is not a mere instruction embedded into the products, their interaction {as Norman said} with users or environments and the way they orchestrate the experience of use or even disrupting the targeted situation. Rather, design (both as noun and the verb) should be understood as a dynamic set of negotiations that are historically and politically concerned with "what [the] action creates beyond what it instrumentally directed" (Fry, 2009). To put it differently, design actions are those decisions and directions that take action and participate in acting rather than to act on designed instructions.

The following three cases will try to make kinds of design activism in different shapes of making change tangible by examining the correlation among the design thing, the environment, people and their perception in different situations.

4. Case Studies

4.1. Egypt Revolution: Tahrir Square

Egypt revolution provides a good example for change by action of design. However the change is made here by nondesigner people on the streets of Cairo. Change as reformation, redesigning, reassembling and remaking. In 25 January 2011, The Egyptian semi-revolution that was locally known as the January 25 Revolution began and took place across all of Egypt. It consisted of demonstrations, marches, occupations of plazas, riots, non-violent civil resistance, acts of civil disobedience and strikes. Millions of protesters from a range of socio-economic and religious backgrounds demanded the overthrow of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Violent clashes between security forces and protesters resulted in at least 846 people killed and over 6,000 injured. The protests took place in Cairo, Alexandria and other cities. {Cayli,2011} One of the most important places of demonstrations was Tahrir Square.
Concerns of visibility and logistics generally push masses to concentrate their demonstrations in a particular place. Therefore, it is possible to claim that mass demonstrations, almost by definition, possess a spatial characteristic. In this respect, Egypt was no different. However, what really highlighted the spatial characteristics of the demonstrations in Tahrir was the fight between pro- and anti-Mubarak demonstrators for domination over the square. Once the latter won, they decided to settle in the square, in order to protect this hard-earned victory. So committed were they in this regard that they converted Tahrir into a small-scale neighbourhood. Redesigning the square according to their needs, the demonstrators gave birth to a unique kind of political activism, which in turn led to their success.

Mass demonstrations are epitomes of how users appropriate artifacts in the urban realm in ways that are not at all forecasted by their designers: it takes only so long before cobblestones turn into munitions and signposts into shields, which can clearly be observed in Tahrir. In fact, a number of design blogs acknowledged the creative gem in the demonstrators’ DIY helmets. Although this much seemed to determine the extent to which design circles took interest in the events, there were many other creative ways in which Tahrir’s protesters related to designed artifacts.
Prominent media organisations such as the BBC and The New York Times used detailed pictures and 3D CAD drawings of Tahrir in order to inform their audience about events unfolding in the square. These pictures and drawings document a series of creative interventions, which may well be called ‘the vernacular of insurrection.’ What are some examples to these interventions? For instance, the demonstrators take a fast food restaurant and turn it into a hospital. This and a number of smaller healthcare centres set up in and around the square provide handy, immediate and free of charge a sort of service that in ‘normal’ conditions is not available to all. The demonstrators who bring their children along to Tahrir redesign a corner of the square as kindergarten. In another corner, a wall is furnished with newspapers so that people who cannot afford them are also kept up to date. Right in the heart of the square is the roundabout that hosts overnight campers. A group of demonstrators show environmental concern by setting up recycling points. Food stalls and flag vendors suggest a functioning economy already forming in the square. There is also a speakers’ corner in Tahrir where people take the floor to share their thoughts with others. What is more, some cases suggest that the demonstrators’ political power stems directly from the creative use scenarios they come up with. The best example for these is perhaps the protesters who spend the nights in tank wheels in order to prevent the army’s feared advance into the square. {Cayli, 2011}
The creative interventions of protesters in public space elements have a clear effect also on a macro level. Fundamental shifts occur in how people perceive the square, which otherwise is planned quite conventionally. For instance, Tahrir, like most public squares, originally has a monument that is positioned in a highly visible spot, and meant to be a main point of reference for people. However, this monument and the person it depicts seem to have lost importance for the protesters. In fact, it does not take long before the demonstrators create their own monuments in memory of the people whom they find important. They set up a memorial wall for the ones lost during the demonstrations. Here they exhibit visuals and text brought by the victims’ relatives. In a more touristic example, the demonstrators create an installation they call ‘The Heart of Egypt,’ which eventually turns into a backdrop for souvenir photos. Tahrir protesters created a new story, a new experience and a new identity for an urban square in a quick but well-thought design. A design made by normal people in an extraordinary situation, that naturally implied a perfect design thinking process every day and transformed each single element of the square to a meaningful tool to achieve a common high goal.

4.2. Tehran- Gothenburg: Forms of resistance

‘Forms of Resistance’ is another instance to express materialized structure of a perception of design action. The project is a collaboration project of two groups of women activists, one in Tehran (Iran) and one in Gothenburg (Sweden). The purpose of this project was recording the process of some activists under supervision of two designers without intervention of designers in designing the process. The process that could change some ordinary workshops for women subjected to violence and find impressive results to show and making discussion in society about the problem of violence against women. While the project evolved as a series of practices that took place and shape over the course of a year, it can also be described in terms of three experimental situations, characterized by
distinct forms in the space-time distribution of social and situated activities. Experiences within each experiment informed how the next was framed and staged.

The first experiment took place in November 2010, in Tehran, based on experiences of violence or resistance against violence in everyday life. The activists set up three writing workshops in three cities, in which the activity of writing was understood as a performative tool to make a common sense of women’s experiences. Around 100 short stories were written, most of them based on an object, an image or a place that should as requested by activists. Each was a story of an object, an image or a place that should actualize women’s experience of violence or resistance. Some of these stories were selected by the activists and were exhibited in a café in a highly visited street, in which they were encountered by pedestrians in the course of their everyday activities. Two designers who accompanied women activists in this project that the most role of "not being designers" or "not using creative techniques to idea management" in design process.

The second experiment was a collaboration that took place in February 2011, with an activist group concerned with violence against ‘undocumented’ women in Sweden. It took the form of documenting the experiences of these women, a process that the women themselves initiated in order to overcome the temporariness of their situations, their ‘bare life’. The idea of documenting undocumented lives came from one of the women who felt that by keeping her own documents, she could still live her life. The process was primarily an individual process done by two women who have been living ‘hidden’ for several years in Gothenburg. The outcome of the collaborative activity was a pocket book including photos taken by one of the women and materials that she gathered from her everyday life, such as notes, diaries, etc.

![Figure 4. Experience of resistance: A note by a woman subjected to violence photo by: Author (2010)](Image)
The third experiment involved staging of the two previous experiments for those outside the experiences, cultures, communities and space/time of the others’ participation. This took place as an exhibition and a series of workshops at a graduate school of art and design in Stockholm, Sweden, in May 2011. The physical installation consisted of a low table and three vertical boards, to which a series of transparent papers were attached. The papers were in a standard 10x10 cm dimension, depicting pictures or texts from the first two experiments.

Figure 5. Experience of resistance: A note by a woman subjected to violence  photo by: Mahmoud Keshavarz(2010)

The images and texts were a version (an abstract translation) of the original materials. The exhibition and workshops were set up for people to view, search, and read through the materials. After a brief introduction, the

Participants of the workshop sessions were invited to select and sequence some of the papers on the blank pages of a book provided. Five sessions were conducted, in which about 45 pages of the book were produced, co-authored by the participants with the materials provided.
DAAR (Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency) is an architectural studio and art residency programme based in Beit Sahour, Palestine. DAAR’s work combines conceptual speculations and pragmatic spatial interventions, discourse and collective learning. DAAR explores possibilities for the reuse, subversion and profanation of actual structures of domination: from evacuated military bases to the transformation of refugee camps, from uncompleted governmental structures to the remains of destroyed villages. Many of DAAR projects are good example of co-creation of Change at the presence of designer as activist-Designer in collaboration with people and in the following case to bring a dead space back to life with a meaningful impact to residents’ everyday life.
The logic of the stone industry in Palestine is one of parcelling and consecration: how to carve up the landscape in a way that is most efficient to the monetary value that can be gained from sacred stone. The industry echoes other mechanisms of colonization in Palestine: parcelling the land through building the wall, bypass roads, and settlements. Through research and visual documentation by DAAR of the ways in which it is extracted, quarried, crushed, and turned to dust we have come to visualize the fragmented impact of the stone industry on Palestine. Now DAAR proposes a way in which this consecrated stone might be profaned and thereby returned to common use. While a quarry is the site of extraction and parcelling, an abandoned quarry can also be seen in another way: as the site where the quarry is re-assembled, re-habilitated, and re-used for other purposes.

Figure 7. Photo by DAAR website
There are many reasons to rehabilitate abandoned quarry sites. Crushed stone prevents surface-to-ground water infiltration and is thus a tool for agricultural rehabilitation. Slurry from dumpsites can be made into bricks for construction. The restoration of quarries can increase biodiversity and create more open social spaces uncommonly found in Palestine. Certainly one of the benefits of this restoration is for the stone industry itself to be able to exert claims of social responsibility. However, rehabilitation also increases the value of the land and has many practical uses for the common.

Given the proximity of many archaeological sites to quarries, the preservation of quarries will also lead to the strengthening of cultural heritage. Architecturally, a restored quarry provides a place to re-activate the traditional uses of stone and its innovative use in Palestinian architecture today and a forum to discuss, investigate, and visualize the common. The myriad architectural possibilities of the quarry lead DAAR to propose a project that will transform the quarry through a common determination of its future use.
There are 48 abandoned quarries located in Area B in the municipality of Bani Na’im near the city of Hebron. The area is known for illegal quarrying sites which the stone industry has created within the municipality itself. The impact of the stone industry in the municipality is high, and its risks are visible. Residents complain of dust, noise, water pollution, and high rates of lung cancer and pneumonia. Some residents have sold their homes to the industry, which demolishes them in order to continue building the mine.

The proximity of the quarries to town infrastructure makes it particularly interesting to see how some of the quarries have been rehabilitated. The fragmented overlap of people’s lives with the
quarry also urges the importance of determining the afterlife of abandoned quarries. Now some of them have been restored into agricultural land, a botanical garden, a community park, and a museum. A school was built on the site of an abandoned quarry that was already located in the middle of the town. The community park pictured above has a pool, garden, playground, and petting zoo. A large cistern built within the park recycles water for the pool and a fountain.  

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5. Conclusion

In this paper, we looked at the term design from an activism perspective. The paper gives an overview of the change in the role and definition of design from solving problems to active treatment, and conscious interaction with the society. We examined “decision making” as key instrument of designer in changing by design as well as the phenomenon of change which is inevitably rooted in each design thing over time. What we have been looking at is not only based in design theory, but we see it actually a demand resulting from what is currently happening in social and political contexts. This is why today various ‘trends’ and categories for practicing and researching design have been emerged such as range of alternative formulations of design, as ‘social’, ‘activist’, ‘critical’, ‘relational’ and ‘humanitarian’ design amassing an increasing number of examples, public exposure and theoretical depth (see also Mazé & Redström, 2009; Ericson & Mazé, 2011).

Associated design practitioners often operate in the public sector, the academy, and the cultural sphere and even the developing world – rather than adopting the more traditional or mainstream orientation of design as a ‘service profession’ to industry. This is not, however, a mere matter of replacing clients in the corporate sector for those in the public sector (cf. Julier, 2011; Mazé & Llorens, 2011) – public and societal actors operate in relation to a particular social complexity that market or industrial models do not address (Westley and Antadze, 2009). The ‘public’ is constituted by the widest range of people and groups with right to speak and to be represented, and the public realm is characterized by uncertainties, contradictions and controversies (Latour & Weibel, 2005; Hinchcliffe & Whatmore, 2006; Cucuzzella, 2010). A central – and critical – issue is thus how design researchers and practitioners generate new methodologies for establishing the relationship to ‘others’ than those traditionally served by design or accounted for in market-based production and consumption. A shift towards the problematic of the social and toward the public realm in design implies the need to reconsider what design is about – its objects and, perhaps more fundamentally, its subjects. This needs to be discussed in design research at first, where design researchers take their practices into the field of action. Therefore, we believe, that the need to create situated methods within the design research is emerging in order to establish new ways of relationship with those who participate in projects as creators or collectors of materials and those who observe the research results.

5 http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/re-use-and-rehabilitation/
What we "do do" affects what we "can do". This is not to argue that "doing" simply restricts capacities. In contrast, what we "do do" opens up and expands some capacities, although an "expansion" in certain directions might in turn restrict what we can do in others. (p.252) (2010)

We, the designers, can do design. Acting is doing design in new horizon, such as cinema. This horizon helps to reframe design as the result of an active and conscious thinking process that creates a strong social, political and cultural message, action or some kind of other result than we may not be able to foresee beforehand. We think that above explained views on this human act are not only essential to be considered when speaking of under repression areas or developing countries, but in the extremely connected world of today, more than ever before, a general notion to be considered globally. At the end we would like to share our concern about the notion of new adaptable concepts of design process across different societies with regarding to the pace and nature of changes. As the design insight in a society depends on the special role of design in mentioned society and role of design is a variable object, which is affected by social functions, design may need new concept to progress. #

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