Fakultät für Design und Künste
Facoltà di Design e Arti
Faculty of Design and Art

Research Cluster: Enable – Design & Art Competences, Material Culture, and Human Development | Timespan: 2018 - ongoing

Design for Critical Knowledge

Mapping critical approaches within design practices

Team

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The research investigates a controversial topic in the world of contemporary design: the relationship between design practices and the possibility of constructing, through those practices, a critique of the social reality in which they operate. The research tries to build a critical mapping of these practices, in order to analyze and describe their characteristics and understand their social value and effectiveness – and at the same time their limits. According to these practices, today design should be seen and approached considering its cultural and normative dimension. The processes, tools and methodologies involved and used in the design of objects, artifacts, devices, services and environments are understood and practiced looking at their ability to intercept, guide, modify and determine the thinking, behaviors and relationships that affect both individuals and entire communities. In other words design practices are taking part in the processes of social construction of reality. This consideration obliges us to reformulate the idea of criticism applied to the project.

Figure 1. Design Conflict – Cover 1

The critical effort is thus oriented towards visualizing and questioning the conditions of possibility within which a certain form of knowledge is formulated and constructed. In this sense, critical design practices will be analyzed starting from their aptitude in articulating and re-framing a certain problem, rather than their ability to produce material solutions to a given problem.

From a practical point of view, the project will converge in two main activities
and outputs:

– An online platform designed both as a digital archive and an interactive map.
The platform will focus on existing projects, highlighting links and contact points
between different experiences and practices, as well as peculiarities or limits of those
practices.

– The publication of a series of volumes entitled "Design&Conflicts". These publication
will focus on the theoretical discussion about design practices, knowledge production
and the representation and articulation of conflictual situations or issues.

The next february the book Design&Conflicts. Mouffe, DiSalvo, Harley, Crampton,
Drucker, Hall will be published by Krisis Publishing (www.krisispublishing.com). It is
the first volume of a series of anthologies focusing on the relationship between design
practices and representation and articulation of conflicts. Each volume is a collection
of selected papers and essays concerning a particular area of critical and political
design. The first volume (with essays by Chantal Mouffe, Carl DiSalvo, John B. Harley,
Jeremy Crampton, Johanna Drucker, Peter Hall) is dedicated to
information design, mapping and critical practices.

Figure 2. Design Conflict – Cover 2

Figure 3. Design Conflict – Cover 3