

Insurgent design coalitions: the history of the Design & Oppression network

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Design research is getting interested in social movements in recent years. Organizing tactics like coalition-building have been taken from civil rights movements and turned into operative concepts such as designing coalitions that point towards converging interests. As such, this concept cannot support social movements, which are not formed by common interests, but by pressing social needs ignored in official and everyday politics. This advances further the revision of the designing coalition concept based on feminist literature and on the authors' experience in weaving the Design & Oppression Network in Brazil. This network was formed in 2020 by design professors, students, and professionals from all over Brazil, as well as from other countries. From its inception, the network was concerned with the Latin-American reality — colonized, culturally invaded, underdeveloped, and oppressed in various ways by the Global North. The network approaches design as a pedagogical and critical process so that the production of design space becomes an opportunity for listening, reflection, dispute, synthesis, mutual care, and insurgence actions against all forms of oppression. From this experience, we propose the alternative concept of insurgent design coalitions to deepen design engagements with social movements.

critical pedagogy; feminism; care; social movements

1. Introduction

Design research is getting interested in social movements and activism in recent years (Björgvinsson et al., 2012; Fuad-Luke, 2013), even if through mild and depoliticizing engagements such as social innovation (Lorne, 2020; Jégou & Manzini, 2008). Several theories and practices have been adapted from social movements to justify or instrumentalize design practices. A case in point is coalition-building, an organizing tactic taken from social movements and turned into a strategy to build creative communities (Manzini, 2015; 2019). The lack of historical references to social movements risks

depoliticizing these organizational forms among designers, so they do not understand them once they join social movements. They might not even join them, thinking that designing coalitions is a social movement in itself.

By looking at contemporary social movements theory, particularly the feminist movement, this paper aims to deepen designing coalitions' conceptual revision (Eleutério & Van Amstel, 2020), as an example of a more productive engagement with social movements in design research. Social movements have historically developed or adopted coalition building to overcome specific situations that do not allow for democratic manifestations into small groups. These situations require forming large groups that can stand intense oppression until the democratic possibility reestablishes itself. In social movements, it is not possible to understand coalition-building without understanding the oppression that motivates their insurgence in the first place.

This paper will refer to our shared story of the founding and weaving the Design & Oppression network in Brazil to revise the concept of designing coalitions and exemplify productive engagements with social movements in design. Firstly, we will present the concept of designing coalitions as found in the literature on Design for Social Innovation and our shortcomings in this appropriation. Then, we turn to our story and describe the network's critical pedagogy approach inspired by Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Augusto Boal, and other authors who stressed the importance of fighting together against all forms of oppression instead of just focusing on one at a time or one in each front. We will describe the repercussions of the network in Brazilian design education, research, and practice. From reflecting on this story, we will finally define insurgent design coalitions as a critical alternative to designing coalitions. With this paper, we expect to foster further engagements between design and social movements.

2. Designing coalitions

According to Manzini (2015, p.50), designing coalitions constitute "those result-oriented networks that coordinate different actors within wider sociotechnical networks (individual and collective, of design experts and nonexperts) that share a vision on what to do and how, and decide to do it together". This conceptualization suggests they are a new organizational form that originates from the widespread availability of digital networks, appropriated by a group of diverse people to deal with emerging matters of concern (Manzini, 2015; DiSalvo et al., 2014; Latour, 2004), such as climate change or food security. These people do not need to be design experts to join designing coalitions, but they may collaborate with design experts to help set up a diffuse design activity that supports non-designers in design activities (Manzini, 2015; 2019).

The diffusionist theory of designing coalitions does not connect to social movements that formed successful coalitions or alliances before widespread digital networks. This lack of historical reference risks disconnecting the historical context of this organizational form as designing for social innovation literature repurposes it to merely describe what happens in a codesign project (Eleutério & Van Amstel, 2020). Instead of pointing to the temporary union of different struggles, as done by social movements, designing coalitions points towards converging interests. The contradiction of oppression is ignored (Freire, 1996) or reduced to a problem of the Other, prone to be solved by technical means.

Despite being critical to the neoliberal discourse, the literature on Design for Social Innovation does not avoid neoliberal practices like technological solutionism (Morozov, 2013) and community entrepreneurship (Lorne, 2020). The neoliberal phase of capitalism, which emerged by the 1980s, led to a redefinition of the political domain and its participants through a minimalist conception of State and democracy (Harvey, 2007; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). This minimalism has deepened inequalities and

made it challenging to raise political confrontations that require the identification of the adversary to be fought, blurred by the melancholic "There Is No Alternative" motto. The apparently rational arguments of neoliberalism mislead social movements to fight abstract issues such as global warming and poverty without demanding and countering the concrete actors who are causing or avoiding these issues.

While reflecting critically on that influence, social movements responded to this reality with new organizational forms that included or reunited a plurality of political subjects that brought together different forms of inequality and exclusion, broadening the previous understanding of the struggles. In the face of neoliberalism, contemporary social movements must build coalition strategies between different political subjects, not necessarily centered on a specific agenda like capitalist worker exploitation, but understanding the subjective complexity that shapes each collective political subject and their commonalities.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) analyzed contemporary social movements' historical continuity and discontinuity in the 20th century. On the one hand, social movements' struggles advance the 19th-century agenda centered on class since they maintain the egalitarian imaginary of the democratic revolution. On the other hand, they are discontinuous to that agenda as they expand the democratic revolution while politicizing other forms of subordination such as race, gender, territory, and disability. Since then, social movements have suffered from fragmentation. Coalition-building emerged as a tactic to mend the disadvantages of diversifying the political agenda. Coalition-building has become a space of articulation where specific flags of each allied social movement can be recognized by other social movements, even if for joining a temporary joint action.

From this rich experience of social movements, we cannot conceive coalitions as "result-oriented" networks (Manzini, 2015), even if eventually the political subjects have indeed common matters of concern (DiSalvo et al., 2014). As Silva e Camurça (2013, p. 9) teach us, "it is in the process of social struggles that we formulate a situation as problematic, we denounce how unfair this problem is, we demonstrate that this problem is not a natural situation, it is something produced by social relations, we provoke indignation towards the problem, and we gather the strength of this indignation of people to build or support the political struggle to face the problem." The problems addressed by social movements are not just matters of concern; they are matters of fact. Oppression is an objective problem that is embedded into societal structures and manifested through various forms of design. It is not possible to fight and overcome oppression on the subjective side of the problem. As Paulo Freire (1996, p. 7) puts it, "liberation is not a gift, not a self-achievement, but a mutual process."

The feminist movement has been quite transgressive and creative in making alliances among different feminisms to overcome subjectivisms (Lima, 2021; Gago, 2020). Feminist theories offer an alternative ontological principle that turns vulnerability into a commitment for relating and designing coalitions through the concept of care (Eleutério & Van Amstel, 2020). Women coalesce not because they have shared matters of concern, but because they have shared matters of care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017), in other words, because they care for each other in the face of intense oppression, even if having different concerns, demands, and political strategies for dealing with sexism.

In the feminist movement, caregiving is not a feminine attribute, as some sexist readings might conclude. Instead, caregiving is a feminist ethic (Lima, 2021; Kuhnen, 2014), part of a political identity built on the articulatory practices of the movement itself. Understanding caregiving as a feminist ethic may help design research distance itself from the understanding that women care because it is their nature to care. It is an essentialist understanding of the social function of women-delegated caregiving, particularly impoverished and racialized women. Understanding care as an ethical practice requires

taking it as a responsibility for all members of society, as a necessary part of social relations, and not as an altruist action. Understanding care in that way does not push away the conflicts inherent to political deliberation and agonism.

In the feminist movement, conflict is presumed to happen and stimulated as a way of dealing with our inequalities (Lima, 2021; Gago, 2020). If we understand the ethics of care by looking at our comrades' experiences, these inequalities ask for consideration. Care is not a way of easing out conflicts but a way of opening up to think about the inequalities involved in these conflicts. Inequalities outside the articulatory spaces (of society in general) are reproduced in the spaces of alliances, so feminists understand they need to overcome the dominant understanding of the masculinized political organization in these spaces, which denies one's responsibility to others. Designing coalitions is prone to reproduce the contradictions of activity into contradictions of space, much like any designing activity whatsoever (Van Amstel et al., 2016).

The feeling of solidarity among different people has been a vital bond nurtured by feminists and other social movements to deal with contradictions inside the movement. Solidarity is a collective political action that bonds together people coming from different personal experiences and social movements and helps them fight a common enemy, but more importantly, in relating to each other in solidarity, people and movements can strengthen their struggle and their subjectivity (Serpa & Batista, 2021). Instead of letting contradictions fragment the movement, solidarity weaves out emotional bonds across the chasms.

We believe that designing coalitions must be further revised based on the feeling of solidarity and the practices of care to provide productive engagements with social movements. We will revise this concept based on what we have done in Brazil to form a coalition of designers that coalesce with each other and with social movements. With the following story, we seek to include matters of care without eliminating conflict and matters of concern from the political arena.

3. The Design & Oppression coalition

If it is not possible to understand coalition-building without understanding oppression, it is also not possible to understand design without referring to everyday politics (Manzini, 2019), which in the case of Brazil, is fraught with oppression. Under the nefarious specter that followed the removal of President Dilma Rousseff by a parliamentary coup in 2016, Brazilians elected an authoritarian, violent, and anti-human-rights government in 2018. This government discharged criticism over public education while praising private education.

The COVID-19 pandemic broke out just when the tension between public universities and the Ministry of Education reached its peak. The minister tried to force a rapid transition to remote education, but the learning infrastructure was not the same across the country and families — many students did not have internet access at home, a personal computer, or a calm space to study. The federal government's inability to deal with this shortcoming followed the same pattern of managing the health infrastructure crisis (Pelanda & Van Amstel, 2021). The sanitary impossibility of mobilizing street protests did not allow the formation of a popular front against the government, and institutional politics failed the population by pursuing their interests while making bureaucratic agreements.

In this context of intensified social contradictions, the Design & Oppression network insurged (Serpa et al., in press). The insurgents were design professors, students, and professionals from all over Brazil and other countries. From its inception, the network was concerned with the Latin-American reality: colonized, culturally invaded, underdeveloped, and oppressed in various ways by the exploitative

bourgeoisie, the male patriarchy, and the colonialist Global North.

The network's objective is to establish bonds of solidarity between all the struggles against oppression, taking design as a tool, space, or issue. This network extends the Latin American critical thinking tradition from Education, Arts, and Sociology to Design. In addition to critically training designers, the network also promotes concrete and continuous social actions that aim at an engaged praxis with social movements.

4. Pedagogical approach of the Design & Oppression network

Amidst the situation of severe political crisis and discredit with public education and being very aware of social movements' historical commitment to change, we embraced the contradictions of design activity as a means to rethink ways of being a designer in the world and relating to other people and beings in a politicized and emancipatory way, without letting the designerly way to go (Nelson & Stolterman, 2014).

We started the network activities by holding a weekly study group meeting, open for anyone to join. The network weavers periodically hold live broadcasts on Youtube, participate in professional events and academic conferences (like this one), and promote partnerships and actions with other organizations. Figure 1 features ads from some of our educational actions: Youtube broadcasts on the possible relationships between design and the teachings of Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Augusto Boal. Figure 1 also includes an ad from the Designs of the Oppressed online international course that systematized what we have learned so far.



Figure 1 - Educacional actions promoted by the Design & Oppression network.

We walked together on this journey with utopian visions, hand in hand with Paulo Freire (1996), to whom the feeling of hope and the act of hoping are recurrent sources of comfort whenever despair takes over the body. In tune with his critical pedagogy, dialogue is at the heart of our praxis. Our meetings are an open space where everyone is encouraged to speak, regardless of their origin or academic background, because we agree with Freire that everyone has something to learn and teach. This dialogical approach deconstructs the cultural invasion that we suffered (and still suffer) in our design practices and thoughts (Angelon and Van Amstel, 2021), cutting the umbilical cord that links design with capitalism.

We decided to follow other comrades in our march to liberate design from oppression: Frantz Fanon, bell hooks, Alfredo Gutiérrez Borrero, Lesley-Ann Noel, and Augusto Boal. They are all Global South authors who suffered from oppression in their lives and expressed solidarity to those who suffered even more. They fought for the liberation of the oppressed with what they had available around on their handiness (Gonzatto and Merkle, 2016). A commonality among them is the solidarity care for the Self and the Other, respecting their ways of being while envisioning their becoming-more potential (Freire, 1996).

While we read and discussed these authors, we cared for each other. Often, we shared personal stories, as bell hooks inspired us to do (hooks, 2014), and we ended up feeling sad, angry, abashed or fluttered. These feelings sparked us to offer mutual help and understanding under the limitations of each positionality. To extend caregiving across the week, we created a WhatsApp group for the network weavers. Many backstage stories were shared, such as why a compicator would not be available to join the weekly meetings due to mental health, grief, unemployment, work harassment, political persecution, and other conditions intensified or generated by the COVID-19 pandemics and the Brazilian political crisis. We offered our condolences, kind words, friendly emojis, and comrade stickers in the group or private messages. Often, we felt like the network was a safety net that bounced us from falling to standing, much like those used by circus acrobats. The limitations of chatting asynchronously for caregiving led us to create a ritual after the weekly meeting, the critical beer (*cerveja crítica*), a post-meeting session restricted to compicators, the network weavers responsible for hosting and complicating the debates. We availed our complicating activity in this ritual, divided some tasks, and talked about our personal life changes as if we were meeting in a virtual bar.

From these readings, discussions, and caregiving, our foundations for acting together in concert were greatly expanded beyond what we could get from our culturally invaded design praxis (Angelon and Van Amstel, 2021). Our inspiring authors did not ignore what had previously been produced by the metropolises. On the contrary: they critically absorbed metropolitan knowledge, putting it in perspective. As Fanon argues (1963, p. 150), "In an underdeveloped country, an authentic national middle class ought to consider as its bounden duty to betray the calling fate has marked out for it, and to put itself to school with the people: in other words to put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities".

After reading bell hooks (2014), we realized we were nurturing learning communities in multiple localities. We tried to understand the specific needs, processes, and consequences of our projects in different places. In that sense, we relied a lot on her feminist critical pedagogy to produce design spaces where we could understand ourselves as a whole, considering our bodies, places, and handiness. This process led us to experiment with activism, theater of the oppressed, music, and other forms of expression (hooks, 1984).

Through our readings and accumulated personal experiences, we concluded that participation in design

(Silva, 2021; Van Amstel, 2009) is, by now, the primary means of tackling oppression. However, participation is by itself a term that can become an empty signifier (Laclau, 2013). Participation can be quite demagogic when people are consulted but cannot join the decision-making or when participation lacks accountability. In extreme cases, pseudo-participation (Palacin et al., 2020) can be a mask for validating violent processes that do not promote substantive but performative participation.

The fight against oppression pushed us to think about participation, assuming the necessary conditions for it to occur, and critically facing its intrinsic political nature. Politicizing participation expands the design space beyond capitalist products, beyond including users to improve market offerings. Participation must engage participants with radical alterity, with the possibility of transforming the Self by incorporating the Other (Van Amstel & Gonzatto, 2020; Szaniecki, 2019). In this way, participation becomes a possibility for listening, reflecting, criticizing, disputing, and producing collective freedom and liberation (Van Amstel and Gonzatto, 2016).

In this liberating participatory design perspective, the design space becomes a space for listening, reflection, dispute, and synthesis, in a word, a controversial design space (Van Amstel et al., 2021). As expressed in feminist theory, in a controversial design space, oppression is recognized as a structural social relation that manifests within the social movements and requires constant dialogue to avoid jeopardizing the struggle. Both Paulo Freire and bell hooks wrote about the need to include controversies in critical pedagogy dialogues (hooks, 2014; Freire, 1996). These dialogues should eventually refer to the conditions for dialogue as something to be designed and redesigned accordingly.

5. Participatory metadesign in the network

When reflecting on the way we produced design pace collectively (Van Amstel et al. 2006), we realized that participation in design must also extend to metadesign (Vassão, 2010; Ehn, 2008). The network is based primarily on Discord, a platform created to chat via audio and text while playing online games. In a collective effort, we meta-designed this gamer tool to the network's pedagogical and organizational interests and our nation. Discord offered lower latency than Google Meet, as well as allowing interaction across multiple simultaneous text channels. This multiplicity of channels was essential for practicing the principles desired by the group: hearing diverse voices, welcoming disagreement, stimulating several means of expressing ideas and feelings, and complicating issues. Our server in Discord (Figure 2) became a space for meeting, training, and systematizing knowledge through our situated production, with different text and audio channels for organizing actions and content.

We were not merely interested in adapting face-to-face interactions to the digital realm. We proposed to contribute with new forms of engagement in teaching-learning processes, rescuing dialogical principles and expanding the possibilities of building emancipatory relationships. The fact that the network is weaved with digital materials allows people from different parts of Brazil (and the world) interested in designing otherwise (Calderon Salazar & Huybrechts, 2020) to meet and take action.

Currently, the Design & Oppression network server at Discord forms, in total, a community of 560+ enrolled members, spread all over Brazil and some Latin American countries like Argentina and Colombia. These members are people who, at some point, entered the server and read the text channel logs asynchronously. Continuous participation in synchronous events is much smaller, ranging from 15 to 90 participants each meeting. On the Discord server, we have a text channel called #apresente-se, where people voluntarily reveal their interests in being part of the network, also identifying where they are from, their relationship with Design, and expectations regarding that space.

Initially, we noticed that audio participation was disputed, especially when meetings had many

participants (30+). Therefore, in the first meetings, we built some formal mechanisms for the distribution of speech turns to avoid only a few people dominating the debate, undermining our diversity of voices principle. We created a text channel called #inscricao-de-fala, in which each participant had to post an emoji to request the speech. Then, when they started speaking, a time-keeping robot appeared in this channel. Most participants never used Discord before and were used to Google Meet and other speech-based conferencing systems.

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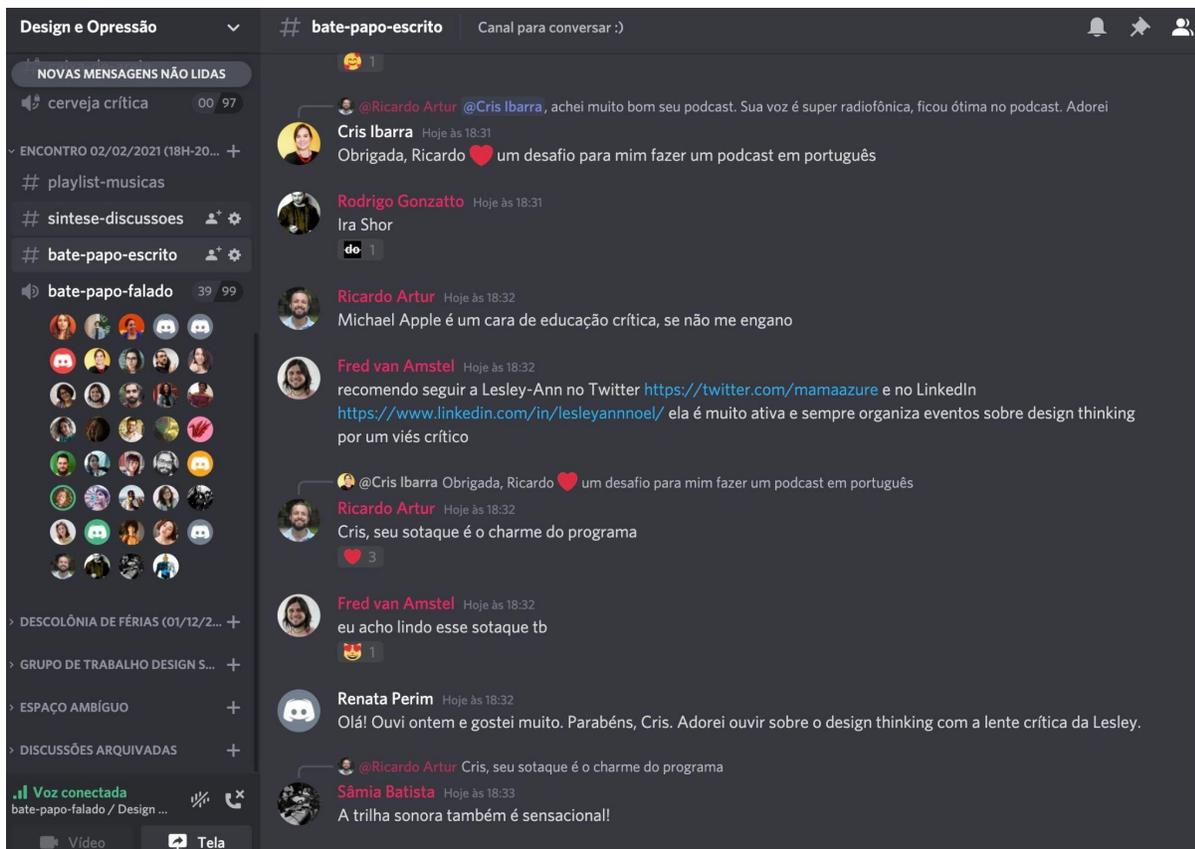


Figure 2: The Design & Oppression Discord server during a weekly meeting, with the audio channel on the left and a text channel on the right side of the screen.

As the months went by, the meeting participants began using text channels with more intensity, complementing and expanding the topics discussed in audio and, eventually, generating parallel lines of inquiry. Sometimes, multiple messages were posted in multiple text channels, making it quite impossible for a single person to follow what was going on, similar to the ancient mIRC chat experience. Instead of recentering the debate, we kept adding new text channels for such chaotic interactions. Participants could post text with copy and pasted pictures, emojis, and animated GIFs within text channels.

Initially, we thought that turning on the webcam could make the interaction more personal during the meetings, but we refrained from doing that. Having only one participant with the camera open, we discovered that those interacting through precarious connections suffered delays and lags. The Brazilian internet infrastructure was under heavy load due to the work-from-home pandemic mitigation policy. In addition to that, we discovered that opening up the camera in a two-hour meeting added extra physical fatigue from looking good at the camera. While interacting via audio, we did not need to wear anything in particular for the meeting; and we could change posture and move freely while talking or typing. Focusing on audio and text interactions prevented us from emphasizing inequalities related to camera definition, internet connection, home furnishing, and body identity markers that become apparent when the camera is on.

However, even if we wanted to emphasize equality, the tool had intrinsic biases that stimulated configuring different user roles, each with a different use power. Unlike Google Meet, Discord offers the possibility of defining roles and privileges. Initially, we were not interested in concentrating powers, and we did not use this feature. Everybody could do everything available on the server. However, once the number of participants grew to hundreds, we became concerned that newcomers could destroy what was constructed and end up oppressing other people in a space that is supposed to be anti-oppressive. While reflecting on this conundrum, we created a user role called complicators — the opposite of facilitators — for those who would act as articulators of the debate. This position would be responsible for complicating the discussion, more like the joker in Theater of the Oppressed (Boal, 2000) than of the facilitator in design thinking (Mosely et al., 2018).

These design decisions were taken in a democratic and collective process, mainly by the end of our weekly meetings. A text channel (#votacoes) took significant decisions using emoji-voting, including the readings for upcoming weeks. There is also the #metadesign channel for any design suggestion. All organizational and network structuring issues described in the previous section were debated in groups and agreed upon, with some eventual dissent.

6. Repercussions of the Design & Oppression network

The Design & Oppression network stems from the Brazilian university's research-teaching-extension triad. In all educational institutions to which we are linked (UTFPR, PUCPR, ESDI/UERJ, UFRJ), students engaged in network activities to address issues neglected or ignored by their study curricula. The repercussions are manifold.

At Federal Technological University of Paraná (UTFPR), a new study group discussed the politicizing design with Paulo Freire's ideas. From this group, six undergraduate research projects that link Paulo Freire to design emerged. There were also a dozen of final works that, directly or indirectly, had an orientation towards more engaged practices that question the colonialist perspective of design. The "Design for People: Laboratory of Design and Social Innovation" course within the Bachelor of Design incorporated dialogical practices from the Design & Oppression network, including several Discord configuration schemes. The network motivated opening the Laboratory of Design against Oppression (LADO, which means "side" in Portuguese), an extension project built to, among other things, support the network. LADO is an open and horizontal space focused on critical education, scientific research, and transformative action through collaboration between teachers, students, and oppressed communities.

At Superior School of Industrial Design of Rio de Janeiro State University (ESDI/UERJ), the extension project "Praxicracy: design, collaboration, and autonomy" was linked to the Design & Oppression network as a means to extend its social movements' reach. The university awarded an extension grant

to this project thanks to the results obtained in 2020 through this partnership.

At Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), an elective project course called "Design and Politics" was offered in 2020 to critically address political issues in design. The syllabus of this course has several references to the Design & Oppression network activities and materials. So far, the subject has been taught three times, with the participation of 100+ students. In this and other courses, pedagogical practices inspired by the Design & Oppression network are also being carried out, including Discord as an interaction platform.

In addition to organizing internal debates within the network and promoting teaching, research, and extension actions in the aforementioned educational institutions, the weavers of the Design & Oppression network participate in external debates at academic and professional events and conferences. We position ourselves from a critical and emancipatory agenda on these occasions, articulating different themes and interests in design.

In 2020, the network organized, in partnership with the Sentipensantes group (UFPE), the "Fogo no Entremeios 2020 workshop", in which participants had to think of words from professional jargon and Design practices that they would like to "burn." Also, the network organized a Forum Theater play on the platform and precarious work at the GFAUD-USP academic week, invited by young Design students to think about the dystopian future of their profession while considering the dystopian present other professions (Figure 3). The main plot consisted of an Artificial Intelligence that claimed to design automatic visual identities for its clients yet delegated the design work to platform workers, precarious designers who earned a few bucks while believing they were entrepreneurs. In the same event, network participants held a conversation about Insurgent Design, in which we discussed possibilities for designers to act in an anti-systemic way and fight such unjust production relations.

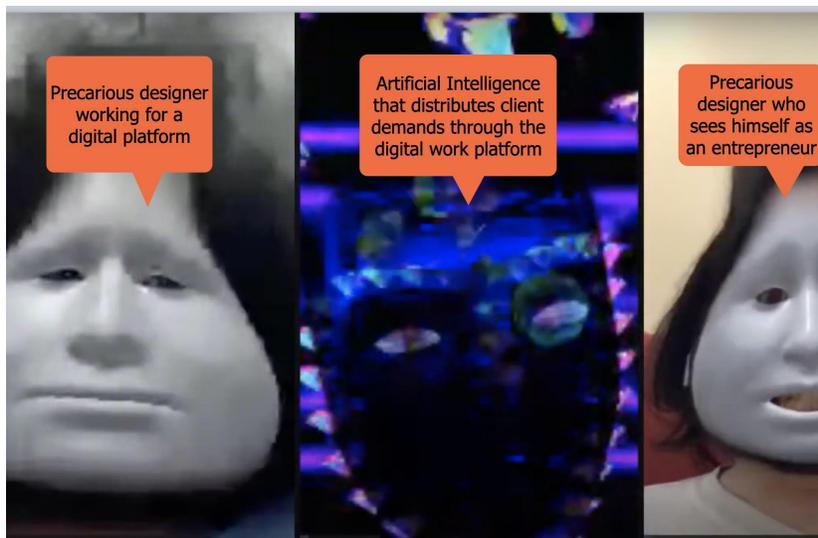


Figure 3: A Theater-Forum play on the platformization and precarization of work presented by the D&O members.

In 2020, the network members joined a panel hosted by Parsons School of Design on participatory design practices in Latin America and a panel hosted by Design Ativista on Decolonial Design. Between July and August of 2021, the Design and Oppression network proposed "Designs of the Oppressed" course, taught in English in partnership with UTFPR and ANDIFES. Forty people from all five continents attended the course. The course contextualized our design pedagogies and practices in Brazilian cultural,

social, and political production traditions. By the end of 2021, the network is preparing its first Forum-Theater play in English at the Attending to Futures conference organized by the Köln International School of Design.

The experience with the use of a platform that allows for a horizontal organization has even influenced the possibilities of remote teaching for teachers who participate in the network. Likewise, the content generated on Youtube is often included in our course syllabi. We believe that many of our training practices have already influenced other groups beyond the network participants.

7. Conclusion

We can conclude that the Design & Oppression network is a case of an insurgent designing coalition, a coalition of different individuals and collectives that join forces to rebel against institutionalized and normalized forms of oppression mobilized in and by design in society. Instead of dealing with matters of concern (Manzini, 2015; DiSalvo et al., 2014; Latour, 2004), these coalitions deal with matters of care, as members need to care for each other in the face of oppression (Eleutério & Van Amstel, 2020). Actors do not coalesce only by sharing interests but by helping each other in their struggles.

Insurgent designing coalitions do not point towards a distant, utopian world of many worlds, a pluriverse as Escobar calls it (Escobar, 2018), but towards a utopian near-future world with less oppression, much more oppression more specific cause to fight for. When discussing imagining possible worlds that oppose the current established order, we are not talking about a peaceful horizon, where issues are resolved, and everyone lives together in harmony. We are aware of the contradictions that any change entails. In order to fight the capitalist system or reorient the economy, we have a lot to dismantle first, to reassemble the structures of our society differently.

Insurgent design coalitions are not centered on a pre-defined objective but on understanding the subjective complexity that shapes each collective political subject. The process of designing a coalition is a political process that enables different struggles to be strengthened. In that sense, the solidarity bonding between people, movements, and struggles can be weaved while confronting and dealing with the inequalities and differences that political subjects display.

If design research wants to have productive engagements with social movements, due appreciation should be paid for its traditional and changing organization forms. Instead of instrumentalizing (and watering down) these forms for design purposes, design should support social movements in dismantling the oppressive structures of reality. From our experience, insurgent design coalitions are not a concept abstracted away from social movements but a concrete lived experience of engaging in a careful, respectful, and solidarity practice.

If we take the feminist perspectives of Lima (2021) and Gago (2020), we understand that we are talking about various institutions that need to be rethought, rebuilt, such as the State, the family, the university, religions, and the way these institutions regulate various fields of our lives. Relevant issues range from our sexuality to the way we dress, including what kind of materials we produce, how much our work is worth, how much different knowledges are valued, what we understand by freedom of expression, and how we guarantee our individual and collective rights. As we see in the uprising of the right-wing, authoritarian and conservative movements, the overdetermination of these contents is not automatic; it will depend on the process of political articulation that gives rise to the left in all kinds of struggles. This situation means that the direction we turn also depends on the leftist movement's capacity in each field to deal with their internal differences and inequalities.

Far from believing that all events in our society fall within the scope of our specialty, we understand that all professions can transform social relations and, consequently, society as they assume a critical stance towards the world. For this, we contend not only critical training but also self-criticism that seeks to identify and elucidate the oppressions in which we, designers in our diversity, participate and which we perpetuate.

Our shared histories of weaving the Design & Oppression network led us to reconsider our positionalities and political perspectives. Assuming that our actions are never neutral but always political, we reflected: on which side of the fight do we stand? On the side of the oppressors, by omission or by deliberate action, helping to maintain the mechanisms that limit our freedom? Or on the side of oppressed people, fighting together to overcome oppression? The question and choice arise in each of our actions, whether as educators or as designers, because, as Fry (2007, p. 8) points out, "Design is deeply political, serving or subverting the status quo". An exempt form of design is not possible, except as an ideology. Unlike what we have come across throughout our training, we do not accept a technician and apolitical conception of design, precisely because we understand that any project takes place in society and involves different agents and agencies.

We share the understanding that all education is ideologically oriented, that all design is political, and, equally important, we define which side we are on and recognize allies in the struggle for a liberating and anti-oppressive design. Despite our inequalities and differences, we share the desire to create spaces for intervention to avoid uncritical activism. The transformation of reality is, therefore, a common horizon for the designers that weave the network. We understand that if we want to transform reality, we need to transform our practices, to overcome paternalistic, ableist, and excluding methodologies, in favor of a design that can harness contradictions to liberate society from all forms of oppression (Van Amstel, 2015).

8. References

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