

copy paste design's

João Carlos Monteiro Martins

Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestão, Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo, Portugal | joaomartins.designer@netvisao.pt

Isabel Maria Silva Pinto

Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestão, Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo, Portugal | isabelpinto71@hotmail.pt

Álvaro José Barbosa de Sousa

Departamento de Comunicação e Arte, Universidade de Aveiro, Campus Universitário de Santiago, Portugal | asousa@ca.ua.pt

Keywords

Design, craft, sustainability, desmassification, personalization

ABSTRACT

The present study presents an alternative perspective to the designer's role in our current society, in which the development of a new product is not an end in itself, but a means by which one can disseminate other values that are higher than those directly linked to the culture of material. The part played by the effect of products is symbolic in the economic interchange and intends to be cancelled by the digital process of Copy Paste, in which the technical information related to the product design is placed on a site on the internet. This can be used and copied freely by the user in the process of product construction. By identifying some examples, one can show the user's tendency to produce his own products. We conclude with a description of the possible use of this site and of its design process.

"Novos rumos no design e na arquitectura não ocorrem por acaso, nascem sempre de mudanças reais verificadas na sociedade, culturas e conceitos"

(New trends do not occur by accident in design and architecture, but always emerge as a result of real changes in society, culture and concepts.)

Victor Papanek, in *Arquitectura e Design*

We are witnessing deep technological changes at the beginning of this century. These are marked by the transformation of our "material culture" by ways of a new technological paradigm, which organizes itself around information technology. The actual process of technological transformation seems to expand itself exponentially in relation to its capacity to create an interface between technological fields, through a digital common language in which information is generated, stored, recovered, processed and transmitted. We live in a world that is rapidly becoming digitalized.

The interdisciplinary character of design, as a subject that sets a relationship between different areas of knowledge, enables it to understand that the process of development of societies is not only measured by the progress and economical enrichment, but rather by a wider ensemble of values. The design emerges naturally as a discipline responsible for a significant part of this process since it does not have a knowledge of its own, but uses several areas of knowledge; it aims mainly at conciliating the knowledge that is concerned with science and technology with those that are part of the humanities and social sciences. Therefore, besides having an immediate and inevitable consumer vision to

produce new goods, the designer should rather have a broader vision due to the presence of different problems and needs: from basic and pre-industrial ways of doing and using products to the most recent and sophisticated materials and technologies. It may seem narrow minded to use only the old concept of shape and function of the product as a priority task of the activity. We are moving in a wide range of areas of knowledge and situations, which can be as apart as the handicraft and the industrial, or, the draft and the virtual reality. Will this be the beginning of a new reform in the concept of activity? Or will this be representative of the multiplicity of concepts and approaches?

It is in this context that the initiative Copy Paste Design's plans to grow, by the projectual activity of its participants. The initiative intends to employ technologies of information and communication, which are fast disseminating, as a means of divulging and sharing areas of knowledge, identities and cultures, moving away from the model of the actual society, in which "the world is composed by markets rather than nations, societies or cultures, where products play the role of symbolic values of the economical interchange". (Margolin, 1998, p. 41) Copy Paste Design's takes its name from the digital process used in transferring information. Using a specially created internet site where not only the construction of manuals and the making of products may be freely copied by the consumer, but also all the necessary information for the production/construction of the chosen product. The system that is generated – author-object-producer-consumer – promotes the participation of the individual user, suggesting an alliance and at the same time appealing to his capacities of perception, comprehension and fulfilment in order to obtain the selected product. Therefore, assuming the role of "prosumer" (Toffler, 1980, p. 266). The result will be the creation of a new product by the user of the product of the design, who might also be compelled by his own creativity/imagination.

Adherence to this initiative by the potential authors of the projects will imply a voluntary approval of its objectives, which appeal to its capacity of observation, analysis, invention, configuration and communication. "When design does not limit itself to material products, designers may influence both organizations and situations in more than one way" (Margolin, 1998, p. 48). Stimulated by the process itself, a reflection over the nature of the problems in terms of the implied principles and values, as well as, its significance to the design and the role of the designer in society, is expected. Whiteley calls this kind of designer "valorised designer". According to this author, the valorised designer is not only the one who has a critical comprehension of the values which constitute the basis of design, but also the one who is audacious and courageous. Whiteley claims that the valorised designer should be willing to defend social and cultural ideals rather than to concentrate just on consumption needs which are linked to well known environmental problems (1998, p74).

207.05

Besides the promotional factor of products of design, this initiative will allow the exchange of experiences by way of the received feedback, as a result of the acceptance of proposals, that we hope, will generate interest, reflection and communication among authors and "prosumer". We will have an individual who produces for self consumption, rather than a consumer who has an impulsive character of simply buying. The society and its own characteristics may be stressed in this paper. Dormer (1995, p.29) points out that the way we look at a handmade pottery vase is strongly influenced by the fact that it is a symbol of someone's work and life style. Experiences, areas of knowledge as well as available resources (materials and tools), will be reflected in the final result even when the origin is common. Papanek (1995, p.251) explains that when the "Inuits" tried to replace natural furs and fox skins by plastic and artificial leather to make garments, they became "literally mortals" because these artificial materials were not effective at protecting them against the severe local weather conditions.

The context of this initiative – i.e. the proposal to create a site to broadcast the design and its concepts, attitude and approach is instigated by our society: how people live, how they move, how they work, how they have fun, as well as their concerns. Will consumers be open to this process? From the technological point of view there seems to be no doubt. We believe that they are inclined to use manual processes in which the consumer creates his own product. Giddens (2000, pp4950) refers that one

of the reasons why the tradition persists in industrialised countries is due to the fact that all institutional changes caused by modernity remained, mainly, confined to public institutions, especially the government and the economy. The traditional methods employed to make things have shown a tendency to remain, or else to be re-established, in different areas of current life. A practical example that can justify this idea comes from China, a country which is in industrial ascension. At the Chinese New Year, when the families get together and give presents to children, the “*jiaozi*”, a kind of ravioli with a meat and vegetable filling (typical of New Year’s Eve) is handmade by the family members seated around the table. This ritual shows the “family union” a value that has survived half a century of “collective education” and, in particular, the decade of Cultural Revolution, when the young were taught not to follow their “reactionary” parents. (Caeiro, 2004, p.204).

As societies develop, man has taken many roles when it comes to the condition of producer and consumer. In the early days, people would consume what they produced and the quality and variety of this production was a consequence of real and direct needs, as was the case of agricultural societies based mostly on self consumption. Thus, one can say that they were neither producers or consumers in today’s sense. These concepts start making sense with the industrial revolution when commercial relationships are established and things come to be produced for exchange. This initiates an industrial society in which goods are produced for exchange, not for self consumption.

The exchanges between producers and consumers initiated an industrial society in which more than was needed was produced. It must be said that both the production for exchange and for self-consumption still exist today, but at different levels. Thus, the economy emerges with apparently, two unequal forces of work or production. One that is based on unpaid work and that results from the fulfilment of ones needs, as well as, those of their family and community. Another that is based on the production of goods and services aimed at the markets where buying and selling transactions take place. Toffler calls this “visible economy” and “non-visible economy” respectively. Whereas the former is the work done by most women at home and is, thus, not considered by the country’s economy, the latter is work carried out by paid workers. (1980, p.266)

Currently, there are millions of people who prefer to do their own thing rather than seeking the help of specialists. For instance, people can measure their own blood pressure without having the presence of a doctor or a nurse. This is only possible because of user friendly equipment being available. Another example is the help lines, such as the Portuguese Saúde 24 – Pediatria (for parents with sick children) that are open 24h a day and have a quick answering service. Parents just need to follow the instructions which are given by doctors or nurses. Another example is that until recently drivers had to go inside to pay for petrol. However, things have changed and GALP (a Portuguese company) has now available a new service which offers their clients the possibility of paying by credit card. This service is known as PAY & Go and is available next to the pump, saving time. E-banking services such as on-line payments are another example. These facilities which are offered by banks, came to replace the original work of the bank clerk. All these examples show how visible economy turned into non-visible economy.

Another sign of the “do it yourself” concept is the success of the Swedish department store – Ikea – which sells home furniture and accessories. Or even the opening of stores like Aki and Leroy Merlin, which sell materials and tools, and whose mission is to help consumers fulfil a dreams and accomplish projects (Merlin, 2002). It does not take long to realize that the customers in those shops are not just electricians, carpenters, plumbers or other specialists alike, but also people who like to have a try at DIY. There are several reasons for this: high and inaccessible prices, difficulty in finding a tradesman, poor workmanship, lack of quality, flexibility of time management.

In this context, there seems to be a need for a project such as the one presented here. There is a new challenge at the designer level as goods that used to be produced by companies can now easily be assembled by non-specialists.

At the consumer level, the initiative suggests that the consumer changes from a receptive and passive consumer into an active, critical and interpretative consumer. At the social level, the initiative presents itself as a way of democratising the product of the design by making it more accessible to all. At the local level, it can manifest itself as a means of sustaining the micro systems of production, by being asked to produce parts or the whole of a product.

It will be possible to create work groups not only resulting from family or friendship relations, but also from communitarian, with the purpose of producing the objects on a community basis, sharing experiences, techniques and ways of doing things. Or even the generation of self sustenance by producing the objects in the professional role, interpretation and construction of the products revealed by this initiative. Are we aware of the importance that such actions have in helping, by other means, people who have different and varied concepts of life, independently, of being supported by the responsible entities when supplying the necessary means that may be either digital or analogical? We are not talking about contaminating, through faster and more economical means, other cultures, but rather, helping to increase its development in an effective way, by building upon its own production. Will the product of the design be conditioned by these ideas if we consider the design as a way of approaching the problems – interpretation, investigation, reflexion, justification, modelling, motivation – a means and not an end to the development of the “*modus vivendi*” and the “*modus operandi*” of higher quality, that take into account the specificity, pluralism and diversity of people and places.

What we are proposing here is, therefore, ways for an alternative mode of action, which affect not only the individual, but also the planet and our civilisation already troubled by deep problems. Problems such as shortage of energy resources, political problems, terrorist threats, problems with the legal system, ecological problems, problems derived from globalisation, of an apparent standardisation of society in which individual, regional, racial, religious, or cultural differences tend to be dismissed. In which family and neighbourhood relationships fade away. In which the concept of citizenship is distorted according to the rhythm of economic desire. As Toffler (1980, pp.350351) pointed out “For the Third Wave civilisation, the most basic raw material of all – and one that can never be exhausted – is information, including imagination. Through imagination and information substitutes will be found for many of today's exhaustible resources - although this substitution, once more, will all too frequently be accompanied by drastic economic swings and lurches. Instead of being dominated by a few mass media, Third Wave civilization will rest on inter-active, de-massified media, feeding extremely diverse and often highly personalized imagery into and out of the mind-stream of the society.”

209.05

Bibliography

- Dormer, P. (1995). *Os significados do design moderno: A caminho do século XXI*. Lisboa: Centro Português de Design.
- Giddens, A. (1998). *O mundo na era da globalização*. Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 2000.
- Margolin, V. (1998). O design e a situação mundial. Arcos: *design, cultura material e visualidade*, 1, 40-49.
- Merlin, L. (2002). *Bem-vindo*. Consultado em 5 de Janeiro de 2004, em Leroy Merlin: <http://www.leroymerlin.com/frontoffice/home?country=BRAZIL&reload=ok>
- Papanek, V. (1995). *Arquitectura e design*. Lisboa: Edições 70.
- Caeiro, A. (2004). *Pela China dentro: Uma viagem de 12 anos*. Lisboa: Publicações Dom Quixote.
- Toffler, A. (1980). *A Terceira vaga*. Lisboa: Edição Livros do Brasil.
- Whiteley, N. (1998). O designer valorizado. Arcos: *design, cultura material e visualidade*, 1, 63-75.