

The Right to design – *Another Possible is Possible*

Henric

Hello and welcome. It is a pleasure to finally run this event originally planned to coincide with the museum exhibition by Forensic Architecture in April 2020. 16 months later, it is a quite different place. Some might argue still the same, but very much in transformation, and for obvious reasons this event has also transformed, hopefully for the better. As Onkar and I had the time to continue to develop a network around the issues and concerns we have placed within the Right to design platform.

Onkar

And briefly, what is the Right to design platform? And to quote ourselves (of course):

The platform has the dual aim of understanding the entangled relationship between design and rights. And as we have discovered by trying to graft the two terms together, and by using the language of rights to further claim design itself as a special kind of rights, accessible outside of its dominant histories, institutions, and identities. And to do this work the platform has been finding influence, allyship and inspiration from many brilliant design thinkers and practitioners, and some of them are here today, that firstly outline design as a capability that humans embody in some shape or form.

And secondly, aims to understand how design could be a form of literacy understood as the ability to identify and understand how the designed world organises and shapes living environments. Furthermore, to use this to critically understand, and to imagine that other possibles are also possible.

Introduction

Henric

While very much being the outcome of ongoing conversations, the platform found its frame and initial momentum by means of a simple question. Having come across a text by Arjun Appadurai who will speak later today–*The right to research*– where he argues that research, and the act of researching, should be a universal right, problematizing the role of education or research from a global perspective, we asked ourselves, what could emerge, if you replace the word research with the word design.

And here we have to acknowledge, we still struggle with the implications of that simple question, or put differently, that struggle is to some degree what The Right to design platform is about, its potential space of practice and possibility.

Onkar

And starting with what we described as a misreading of Appadurai's text, we've continued to probe this question through various events, Live Action Roleplay (LARP), through education, and publication channels, and with external partners such as the Urgent Pedagogies platform at IASPIS and Art Inside Out in Region Halland. In addition, misreading has also developed into a methodology in its own right, whereby The Misreading Group identifies and works with texts, fictions, essays and poetry that might be described as traditionally sitting outside of design theory, research, and criticism.

Through collective readings these texts are deconstructed by categorising designed things, systems and situations into indexes. These indexes are then considered and discussed in relation to rights violations, and their social, cultural, and political dimensions.

Henric

Acknowledging our limited and situated understanding of how the relation between design and the rights can be understood, our plan for the event is to map a tentative cartography of design rights by recognising practitioners who in their own way, have already been engaging with these questions, although not necessarily through the rubric of design rights, by foregrounding

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a range of approaches and methods that not only visualise the material as issues of design and rights, but hopefully complicate the grafting, of the two terms together.

Onkar

This tentative mapping for now has been organised through the five following frames.

1. **The Design of Rights**, understanding the history of rights as designed, artefacts with complex histories, and politics.
2. **Design Rights Now**, understanding the relationship between design and rights through intellectual property laws, and in the form of copyright, trademarks and patents.
3. **Design Rights Violations**, understanding design practices that visualise, materialise and mediate rights violations and injustices.
4. **Design Literacy, and Readership**, as a means to show how design itself can be the tool for producing and facilitating rights violations and injustices.
5. **The Right *not* to be Designed**, understanding how development projects, as well as computational systems intentionally design subjects and subjectivities.

Henric

And so, to the format. For this purpose, we have invited a range of guests to contribute with presentations and conversations as listed on the slide. The afternoon is organised in a set of sessions for the first part of the event will be in this space. For the final session starting at 6pm, we will move to the auditorium, to my left.

The event will be audio and video recorded by Badou Jobe sitting over there. In addition, Åbåke on my side will operate as

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stenographer throughout the event. There will be a number of breaks with refreshments. The ambition is to have a less formal setup, which also invites conversations, both within the sessions and during the breaks, feel free to ask questions and take notes, but respect the speakers, and your fellow audience.

Onkar

And connecting to you, the wonderful audience, we would like to welcome design students from MA2. This event has been formulated into a module, where we will work with the question of design and rights in relationship to professional practice. We're also happy to have students and tutors from the rest of the MA design unit. And finally, we have special guests, Elmina, Ajla and Benjamin who are design ambassadors for the Röhsska muséets *Design Klubben* initiative in Biskopsgården. And they will also be documenting the event this afternoon.

And also, before we move swiftly on to the first session, we would also like to do some quick thank you's. So besides our wonderful speakers. Thank you. We would like to thank Maria Carlgren and Anna Fransehn, who've been really supportive in organizing this event, as well as Patrick Winforss and the group of technical gurus over there, Andrea Bergvall and Badou Jobe at the Museum.

And also, thanks to Magnus Erickson, at IASPIS and Jyoti Mistri and Rose Brander at PARSE, and all our wonderful colleagues at HDK-Valand. And finally, we're happy to say that this event is also the first in the series of different initiatives and events that we plan to work collaboratively with PARSE, and the Urgent Pedagogies platform at IASPIS.

Roundtable 1 in progress

Henric

So with this, I think we invite our first two guests. It's the roundtable one *borders, institutions and histories* with Mahmoud Keshavarz & Christina Zetterlund.

[audience applause]

