

Snapping (identities) through design forward

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«Social norms are powerful. People will mostly do what they see others do. It's how the human animal learns to succeed. What we learn from the curricula of conventional education pales in comparison to what we learn by watching the actual behavior of the teachers and students around us.» (Mau, 2020). This reflection, in relation to design as a discipline capable of enacting transformative processes in society - defining it through the formalization of roles and possibilities, as well as to stereotypes and forms of oppression - offers an inspiring perspective of the subject matter. In fact, Design is a leading discipline in the definition of society, shaping roles and possibilities, as well as stereotypes and forms of oppression. The concept of social norm can be analyzed from different perspectives, such as gender and identity, culture, ethnicity and many other aspects that contribute to the definition of identities (Lorber, 2021). These invariably result in stereotypes and prejudices, based on socially accepted social patterns rooted in a past that is too far from the cultural model in which we are immersed. An ever-evolving model, projected into a fluid future.

In the current design landscape, understanding the role and transformative aspect of the discipline is critical to telling its story and evolution from a multidisciplinary and inclusive perspective. As Bruce Mau states, to design new standards, it is mandatory to create an environment that aims for change. It becomes necessary for designers to adopt a new mental approach by going for a social, creative and ecologically sustainable model.

To pursue this goal, Paul Dolan offers a tool called SNAP - which stands for Salience, Norms, Affects, Primes - to understand how people make their decisions. This approach, derived from neuroscience, opens up valuable multidisciplinary scenarios for the design profession. For design capable of making a tangible change in society, confronting this tool - such as others coming from different disciplines than Design - offers a reading of the impact that design work has on the user.

Specifically, in the SNAP tool applied to gender studies and the design discipline, the term "Norms" opens up a parallel reflection: such normality - otherwise called standards - defines roles, social order, power hierarchies, oppressions. But note also that social order is an international structure, the components of which take part in an artificial construction of a pyramidal system of power. And today, these archaic norms do not reflect the fluidity of the social context where designers, future designers and users are evolving, becoming vehicles for the cultural evolution in which they are immersed. « Design is responding to an age of intense economic, political and ecological instability with resourcefulness and creativity. Public interest is soaring as a new generation of designers is using advanced technologies to pursue their political and environmental objectives in increasingly

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ambitious projects, as well as to reinvent the objects and spaces we use every day» (Rawsthorn, 2018). How will future designers cope for snapping identities forward, through their abilities and capabilities?

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