

Polyphonic Praxis: Towards a Collective Turn in Design Pedagogy and Practice

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Design operates in a global framework but its claim to be an agent of (social) change has been undermined by a failure to deliver an authentic multivocal pedagogic practice: its homogenous neutral tendencies are, thus, at odds with a language of participation, diversity and inclusivity. In a critical approach this paper asks what role the neoliberal university's learning spaces, internal hierarchies (curricula, studios), pedagogic heritage and public platforms (conferences) play in marginalising the voices of those beyond the sphere of institutional power. The 'collective turn' is introduced as a new term for co-operative radical action, a revolutionary thematic, drawing on progress made in fine art and architecture towards more collective modes of practice and living. In a reflexive, critical and inclusive approach that is sharpened by decolonial perspectives, the foundational methodologies, myths and conditions of design pedagogy are challenged to identify alternatives. The polyphonic formation of the collective is framed here as an untapped source of power derived from a synergy of diverse participants in a collaborative and co-operative formation, similar to the orchestra. As a catalyst for change in design this paper argues that a collective sensibility and social structure provide the most generative conditions for a genuinely polyphonic praxis. Not as a 'rainbow coalition' of benign conformity in which difference is neutralised, but as a community of intent in which the conflict or tension of difference provoking a critical challenge to the very foundations of the discipline.

Keywords: *collective turn; polyphonic praxis; critical pedagogy; graphic authorship; decolonial design; generative practices; orchestra*

1 Introduction

Graphic design's acquisitive impulses and porous edges characterise a culture of openness and revolution, which embraces change and newness in a synthesis of (early) modernist principles and consumer culture. Ingrained into the artefacts and communications systems of contemporary life, graphic design forms a lens through which to explore the world and one's place in it. Through the widespread accessibility of digital technologies and a concomitant familiarity with graphic design's language of typeface, font, page layout therein, the discipline is also infused into the everyday lives of non-designers. The democratic emancipatory possibilities of this techno-social shift are constrained by a number of underlying impediments and contingencies, for instance, how representative of community, complex social issues and groups are the design teams who speak on their behalf?

Drawing on the critical pedagogies of Henry A Giroux (2014, 2011) and bell hooks (1994, 2010) graphic design's appetite for revolutionary change is interrogated in the context of academic curricula and internal discursive spaces (seminar groups, reviews, studio debate), public platforms and articulations (conferences, publishing, graphic authorship). Education represents a nascent site for critical reflexivity and change in design but is a far from neutral terrain, whether reaffirming the status quo or engaging in critical discourse around truth and knowledge. The attributes of collective pedagogic practice and authorship are analysed in this paper through a socio-politically accountable critical pedagogy (Prado and Oliveira, 2014) situating class, gender and race at the heart of design/ing. As Tony Fry (2010) and Dunne & Raby (2007) argue, design either reinforces the status quo or subverts it through change. Decolonial perspectives are brought to a reflexive, critical and inclusive mode of change, asking what role the university's learning spaces, curriculum and pedagogic heritage play in including or marginalising the voices of those beyond the sphere of hegemonic power. If the discipline is to authenticate its own claims as an agent of social change, the first and most radical revolution must be in design itself. A radical process of disruption, deconstruction and critical interrogation is therefore sought in a challenge to the socio-economic and political bias, embedded in its academic foundations, from the 'universal' Eurocentric influence of modernism to design's core assumptions and social structures of learning.

Dialogic in character, inclusive and open-ended this approach this is as an invitation to further discourse, which anticipates being enhanced by contributions from diverse positions and experiences. Eschewing the problem-solving paradigm of traditional (modernist) design this paper prefers a problem-setting process adapted from Donald A. Schön's (1983: 49) Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action, described as a self-reflective conversation with a situation (Schön, 1983: 79). In Schön's (1983: 49) process, "interactively, we *name* the things to which we will attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them". Thus, a self-reflective (decolonial) transformation of design's historical narratives and authorship is named as the situation, framed by contemporary pedagogic practices.

First, a historical overview of design education's social production of learning is considered to unpick the pedagogic principles and practices that underpin current curricula and academic programmes. Design education's revolutionary impulse is considered within the hidden curriculum (hooks, 1994; Giroux and Penna, 1979) and neoliberal university, underpinned by an active critical pedagogy. The discursive contexts and conditions of learning are key to change because power and freedom are the cornerstones of an

emancipatory education, inscribed into educational institutions and social structures (Freire, 1970, 1985).

Secondly, graphic authorship is considered as the shared or individual public voice of design: who speaks and is heard, whose voice is recorded as significant knowledge in academic learning environments and in public discursive spaces. Collective practice and authorship is explored in this proposal as an ideological shift and methodological antidote to the contingencies of current market-led forces in (graphic) design practice and pedagogy, which valorise the heroic individual, increase isolation and delimit social co-operation.

Thirdly, collective and co-operative structures in art and architecture are examined as new ways of overcoming the limitations of competitive creative practices in graphic design. Sociological insights into co-operation and collective action are drawn from sociologists Alberto Melucci (1996) and Etienne Wenger (1999), while Harriet Edquist and Laurene Vaughan (2012) provide analysis of *The Design Collective: An Approach to Practice*. Fundamentally multivocal or plural in character, the 'collective turn' is coined to help envisage a disciplinary shift in consciousness, catalysing alternative (critical) design voices and authorship, to identify new modes of exchange and expression that exploit collaborative intelligence within more multivocal reciprocal practices. The 'turn' is deployed in its articulations as a verb (a mass social act), an adjective (collective power and responsibility), and as a noun (a pedagogic design collective) encapsulating a decisive moment of social change in the arts, architecture and local communities.

Finally, a polyphonic modality of graphic design pedagogy is proposed in which the power of multiple voices in discursive practice and collective intelligence is forged through a tension of difference, rather than the neutrality of the like-minded club of friends (Wenger, 1999). Richard Sennett's (2012) notion of the orchestra as a cooperative collective is employed as a comparative mode of polyphonic praxis. The term 'polyphonic' is employed here as a musical metaphor to invoke a richer tonality for design authorship, in a plural rather than singular formation, similar to the choir or orchestra.

2 Historical articulations of design pedagogy

The Bauhaus centenary (2019) affords educators and students of design an opportunity to critically reflect on the school's influential methods and motivations and how they anchor the discipline's intangible principles in current academic programmes and processes. The schools in Weimar (1919-1925), Chicago and later Ulm, founded by former students and tutors (1937 and 1953, respectively), helped establish modernist design's epistemological positions, universal claims and consumer capital. The significance of the Bauhaus philosophy of inter-disciplinarity was substantiated by dogmatic rules and ideological publications, from Walter Gropius and Theo van Doesburg, for instance. Other notable examples include: Jan Tschichold's (1928) *Die Neue Typographie*; Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's (1925) *Painting, Photography, Film*; Johannes Itten's (1975) *Design and Form: The Basic Course at the Bauhaus*, based on an integrated foundation teaching model (1919-1922). Such examples of graphic authorship served to legitimise and disseminate the school's revolutionary practices. Several texts and artworks have subsequently been ascribed 'canonical' historical status, exemplifying 'timeless' (neutral) typography and predominantly functional design forms.

Notions of design's neutrality persist as traces in design discourse and pedagogic practices embodied in a utilitarian aesthetic, exemplified in Beatrice Warde's (1932) essay 'The Crystal Goblet or Printing Should Be Invisible' treatise on clear typographic communication: "Type well used is invisible as type, just as the perfect talking voice is the unnoticed vehicle for the transmission of words, ideas". However, a visual language of neutrality, disguises authorship and subjectivity, which become inscribed into tropes of modernist design, such as sans serif lower case type (Tschichold, 1928), and the truth of photography (Moholy-Nagy, 1925). Francisco Laranjo (2018) insists that modernism's universal principles not only reinforce the North Atlantic axis of control over design practice and discourse but enable designers to distance themselves from the socio-political implications of their visual messages. Decolonising Design (2018: 78) go further by arguing that "the condition of modernity has concealed, destroyed and denounced all other forms of thinking". The discipline's educational heritage masks an occidental hegemony of design's vocabulary that silences marginal voices and delimits non-western epistemologies and pedagogic practices (Ansari, 2019).

Despite professing egalitarian access to art and design education for both sexes, certain disciplines were fundamentally gendered, exacerbated perhaps by a white male-dominated master-apprentice tutor-student dynamic? For instance, women were debarred from studying all subjects at the original Bauhaus except those considered suitably 'feminine', such as weaving and pottery. Traces of the Medieval guild system based on the prestige and authority of the master as a highly-skilled practitioner of his trade can still be found in the design classrooms/studios or tutor groups today. Critical pedagogies developed by Henry A Giroux (2011, 2014, 2018), bell hooks (1994) and Ivan Illich (1970, 1974) from the foundational work of Paulo Freire (1970, 1985, 1993) are particularly concerned with reconfiguring the traditional teacher-student (master-apprentice) relationship. Here, the teacher is the active agent (the authority who knows), and students are the passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge (empty receptacles to be filled). Freire (1993: 49) describes the process of learning by rote as 'banking', an unquestioning flow of information from tutor to learner, negating "education and knowledge as processes of inquiry". Students are framed as adaptable and manageable: a bourgeois educational model of *adjustment* that reinforces homogeneity and neutrality (Illich, 1974; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2011, 2014). Education may be socio-economically transformative for many students, but power is commonly embodied in the authority of the tutor in the classroom/studio, the assessment and progression process, and the course reading lists where certain histories and voices are given primacy. The next section looks at how external market forces shape internal institutional frameworks in the neoliberal university, reproducing limitations on the vocal expressions of the marginalised and less privileged (hooks, 1994).

3 The neoliberal university

Art and design education has always been linked to professional practice and the societal or commercial agendas that frame their methodologies and priorities. With the expansion of design education as a commodity, capitalist values and neoliberal marketisation of knowledge now shape the curriculum and the social space of learning. The reductive tendencies of mainstream commercial design have led to entrenched socio-cultural norms and a monovocal visual language (Helfand, 2001). In its aggressive colonization of everyday life, a market culture of standardisation and competition is as embedded in educational

institutions as it is across all levels of society: as critical discourse has diminished, conformity and neutrality have increased.

Bureaucracy and excessive auditing have become central features of post-Fordist education, which is evident in the rigid programmes, increased administration, and a preference for metrics and surveys (Fisher, 2009: 79). 'Value for money' is now written into the UK's Higher Education and Research Act (McRae, 2018), despite its undefined status. A primary issue for the (right-wing, UK) media, 'value for money' obviates discourse around cooperation and collective power, framing education within a neoliberal vocabulary of common sense, which attacks all forms of social agency antagonistic to market values (Giroux, 2011, 2014). The capacity to co-operate with those who differ is exponentially delimited in the academy as it becomes atomised, aligning itself with a labour market characterised by socio-political imbalance and precarity: "superficial relations and short institutional bonds together reinforce [this] silo effect" (Sennett, 2012: 8). Education is reframed in this paper, not as a 'reflex' of the labour market but as an act of critical thinking and transformation through collective action (Giroux, 1985: xi).

Isolated modes of professional practice and education have become the dominant routes to validation, recognition and commercial success: a paradigm that is dependent on competition rather co-operation or collaboration within academic institutions. Individualised journeys through education and practice are reinforced by the design press and awards system, underpinned by a "neoliberal ideology [that] emphasises winning at all costs" (Giroux, 2014: 9). This is counter to the reality of design as a collaborative practice: as Adrian Shaughnessy (2016: *np*) argues in 'Collaborate or Die', "If you want to function as [an effective] practitioner, you need to learn the dynamics of ensemble performance".

3.1 The hidden curriculum

The hidden curriculum is an experiential by-product of learning in the social environment of the classroom or studio within which the silencing, self-censorship or denigration of 'marginal' positions is encoded, while remaining hidden to others. The (privileged) student feels entitled to this community of knowledge, and is empowered to exploit its attributes to transform and enhance his/her learning. The inherent inequality of this social process has deprived the economically disadvantaged, women, and certain racial/ethnic groups, an equal chance to thrive. Freire (1993: 50) describes this as a pedagogy of oppression because it "attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power". For hooks (1994: 78), the assimilation of bourgeois values that incorporate a language of subjugation, were absorbed and assimilated, not only as an uncontested truth but as a necessary form of acceptance and belonging. Such obedience to authority was underscored by an ambivalence about "institutions where knowledge was shared in ways that reinscribed colonialism and domination" (hooks, 1994: 4). The social power relations in the academic studio space are identified as a source of such inequality: "white male students continue to be the most vocal in our classes. Students of color and some white women express fear that they will be judged as intellectually inadequate by these peers" (hooks, 1994: 39).

When, a 'multicultural' change was introduced to hook's educational sphere, the burden of transition from segregation to integration was placed on the black students attending a white school, not on the white students, tutors or institutional management therein. A refusal to embrace and affect change by the dominant patriarchal elite resulted in a collective backlash,

resulting in tactics of belittlement or ostracization, applied with the intention of dissuading staff from shifting their mind-sets and methods to enable a true paradigm shift (hooks, 1994). The neoliberal university's urge to sustain harmony in the classroom, to establish 'benign cultural spheres' conforms to a conservative and liberal perversion of the progressive vision of cultural diversity (hooks, 1994: 31). Giroux (2014: 38) describes insidious constraints on teachers' critical freedom in US schools by citing legislation that bans critical thinking lessons and ethnic studies, while removing those teachers who are deemed to have too-heavy an accent. Thus, constraining the tutor to a state of powerless silence. From the racial bias (Breland, 2016) of facial recognition and the gendered inequality of computer programming (Hicks, 2018) to the visual language of publication design and advertising, graphic design is susceptible to the geopolitical subjectivity of the designer him/herself.

Today's students are increasingly framed as knowledge consumers, reproducing the established order of control and conformity, often unwittingly reinforcing social stratification (Illich, 1974; Fisher, 2009). By unpicking (graphic) design's historical narratives and pedagogic practices, the academic power structures that shape thought and facilitate change in corporate and social spheres, can be challenged and alternatives proposed (Ansari, 2018). Monovocal design discourse may be entrenched in the subtle or more explicit social inequalities of the neoliberal university, yet the discipline's inherent embrace of revolutionary language means it is – conceptually and theoretically, at least – amenable to change. Agency is manifested in the intellectual and creative freedoms afforded by the traditional university: not only in the freedom to make, think and speak but significantly the freedom to ask why, to disagree, disrupt, and transform. From the foundations of design knowledge and pedagogic tradition, to the critical spaces of the neoliberal university, collective agency is proposed as a new way for designers to overcome the coercive tendencies and socio-political bias of the hidden curriculum.

The individual and collective voice of design is considered in the next section in relation to graphic authorship: an umbrella term concerning the originality of works devised and disseminated without the need of a client, including published writing (academic journals, blogs, design press) and conferences/festival presentation. By embedding critical reflexivity into the social structures of learning as an intrinsic part of the process the *need* to have a voice is transformed into the *right* to have a voice (Freire, 1985: 51).

4 The neoliberal university

Graphic authorship has occupied a contested position on the edges of the discipline, since a surge in critical practices in the 1990s, as graphic designers became more vocal about the politics of design, its role in contemporary consumer culture, and social responsibility according to the Womens Design + Research Unit (WD+RU, 2015). Post-modern critiques of graphic design's modernist sterility and uniformity centred on its distance and disconnection from an increasingly complex world. In response dynamic complex visual and intellectual alternatives emerged during a surge in critical practices in the 1990s, while designers adopted the role of critic and author. The voices of radical change failed to capitalise on their presence in the critical sphere, lacking the collective momentum needed to instigate deep long-lasting transformation. Design soon returned to a corporate modernism that had proved so successful in an increasingly globalised design culture. For Jessica Helfand (2001: 42) this is defined as: "Minimize difference. Maximize reproducibility. Make it easy, accessible,

understandable to all. This is the univernacular: ultra-homogenized and distinction-free, the international language of the status quo.”

Authorship privileges the voice of the speaker and legitimises the subject of debate – its conceptual field and geopolitical references – but also implies responsibility to interrogate the framework through which expression, access, and identity are made possible. As the tools and technologies of visual communication have infiltrated every sphere of public and private life, a process of digital democratisation has facilitated greater graphic authorship through a global community of educators, amateur bloggers and professional practitioners. The new global reach of communication technologies has enabled the local community to operate on a vast geopolitical scale, connecting disparate like-minded people facilitating change. By exploiting the power of the many mistrust in moral responsibility and delivery of social needs by big corporations and (local) governments (Vaughan, 2012) is expiated. The number and frequency of voices has increased, but greater volume has not been accompanied by greater value, neither in terms of critical reflexivity nor diversity.

In the social production of knowledge, public platforms, such as Wikipedia have implications for historical truth and visibility, yet a clear gender bias is found: “just 16% of the site’s volunteer editors are female and only 17% of entries dedicated to notable people are for women” (Cecco, 2018). As such, each new narrative of world events or human endeavour, continues to be framed by and carried forward by men: a mode of domination, in which “power, technology, and ideology come together to produce forms of knowledge, social relations, and other concrete cultural forms that function to actively silence people” (Giroux, 1985: xix). From classrooms (hooks, 1994) to conferences, those given space to speak, or who express themselves freely, unafraid of censure, tend to be from a very narrow demographic.

When a conference organizer gives a designer the opportunity to speak on stage, it’s a statement that their perspective is of value to the design community. If the majority of those given the stage are men, the implicit suggestion is that the most valuable perspective is that of a man’s. (Eye on Design and Notamuse, 2019)

What the Eye on Design and Notamuse (2019) team discovered in their research into female contributions at design conferences was not only the low percentage of speakers but also the comparably short time they were given on stage compared to male presenters. The proportion of female representatives, they noted, was often a third or even a quarter of the total. Even when an equal number attended, men were given sole use of the stage, while women tended to share the platforms with other speakers. The conclusion they came to, despite claims of cutting edge line-ups of innovative and international leaders from the sector, is a comprehensive lack of inclusivity. The design community has done little to address the marginalisation of women’s voices, or the gendering of new technologies. Feminist Studies and visible action have made inroads towards redressing this im/balance of authorship and pedagogic practices (hooks, 2010) yet inequalities persist through the hidden curriculum (Illich, 1974), and in patriarchal-historical narratives of design. A counter-cultural impetus to many collectives (Vaughan, 2012: 14) of which the feminist collective is a worthy subject of research (See Red Women’s Workshop, 1974-1990; Matrix Feminist Design Co-operative, 1980-1995; muf, set up in 1994;). Substantial enough to merit distinct modulations of the collective as an inherently familial space, the collective arguably forms a logical and necessary social support structure for women over the centuries.

Exclusion represents a subtle form of hegemonic control in design's public domains, as Prado and Oliveira discovered when their proposal for a paper on 'Decolonizing Design' was rejected by an international design conference (2016), inspiring the formation of their critical research collective. The Womens Design + Research Unit (WD+RU, 2015: np.) was similarly formed (in 1994) in response to "a highly visible male dominated graphic design profession" at an international conference line up. Provoked by the exclusion of prominent female design speakers, WD+RU (2015: np.) sought to create spaces for conversations to take place, "where people could feel empowered and contribute to an emerging discourse on design and feminism". In the performative theatre of the crit, review, pitch and presentation, the design student encounters power systems which he/she is either able to exploit to progress, or is excluded. A critical interrogation of design's monovocal tendencies at conferences, studios and platforms exposes not only the limitations of market-driven discourses around design, but also the politics of domination that are produced and reproduced in the educational environment: "Making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformative pedagogy" (hooks, 1994: 39).

A transformation of graphic authorship from a singular voice to research-led collective articulations characterised by a polyphonic praxis is sought. By individualising public life, human experience and education, Fisher (2009) argues that capitalism seeks to reduce the social power of community. In the next section collectivity is outlined as a more progressive social model of cohesive diversity, coalescing difference in collective social structures, in relation to more established movements in fine art and architectural practice.

5 A Collective Turn for the Design Community

Through inter-dependent social configurations the design collective represents a radical model of communal power: a multi-vocal process of design formulating participatory connections between stakeholders and communities with a more socio-political purpose. Recalling Schön's (1983) problem-setting method, the collective design group/agency is defined as a 'situation' which enables a field of shared action (Melucci, 1996: 16). Collective action is framed as "the presence of decision-making mechanism, the setting of goals, the circulation of information, the calculation of outcomes, the accumulation of experience, and learning from the past" (Melucci, 1996: 17). A knowledge-commons or collective intelligence is, thus, formed in the process. Collectivity facilitates a dispersal of power from a hierarchical pyramid effect to a more multi-vocal mode of teaching and learning in the socio-political structures of design education and practice. Collective action is not by definition socially beneficial or benign, as the global rise in populist politics and right wing rhetoric demonstrates. The European surge to the right is characterised by a drive to exclude and divide in an 'us' and 'them' contest, based on national purity, economic or ethnic cleansing and sexual orientation (among many issues). What is needed, according to Melucci (1996) is a shift in the language used around collective sensibilities: to devise and describe new methodologies and mind-sets, with social justice at its core. In similar terms to an engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), collective action is defined as:

a process continuously activated by social actors... Providing an account of the plurality and tensions constituting a collective actor, collective identity, is a cognitive tool for this learning process (Melucci, 1996: 62-63)

Yet in adjusting to meet the dominant culture of a social group, the community of practice may inadvertently adhere to a bourgeois pedagogy of neutrality in which sameness rather than the tension of difference is sought. As a collective social learning system, Wenger's (1999: 14) communities of practice are, not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people, but formed by "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly". Through collective belonging and a flattening of (horizontal and vertical) power-relationships at university the students' sense of agency is awakened and collective action is provoked. Working within/beside institutional systems (curriculum, timetable, self-managed time) the collective is challenged to reconfigure their own motivations and pressures within the course and college.

To design is to immerse oneself in a process of participatory material production, involving negotiations between and within a multiplicity of agents, human and nonhuman alike (Miessen, 2016). Miessen argues that the term 'participation' has become increasingly overused, it has morphed into a mode of neutralising difference, similar to hook's (1994) 'rainbow coalition' of benign conformity. What we need is a new mode of collaboration that goes beyond consensus: collective critical action is proposed as one antidote. A language of participation, community and collaboration now dominates discourse around public cultural institutions such as art galleries and museums, mirroring a shifting focus in fine art and architecture emerging from a relational model of practice. Participation in itself encourages co-creation but does not prevent socio-cultural bias of the kind identified in the hidden curriculum. Art and (graphic) design have always been interactive in the sense of sociability and dialogue, what new technologies and social media have added to the exchange is an emphasis on the significance of participation. Etienne Wenger's (1999) theory of inter-personal participation, has helped inform meaning making in the techno-social practices of design pedagogy.

Today's complex problem solving requires multiple perspectives... We need others to complement and develop our own expertise. This collective character of knowledge does not mean that individuals don't count. In fact, the best communities welcome strong personalities and encourage disagreements and debates. Controversy is part of what makes a community vital, effective, and productive. (Wenger, et al: p.10)

Sennett (2012: 15) also describes collective co-operation as a cohesive *conflict*: "weaving together these differences is like conducting a rich conversation". The shape and voice of each collective is determined by the participants' skills and preferences, the immediate environment of the group's formation, and its underlying aims. By repudiating the dominant narrative of individual genius, the collective creates more space to think through social relations, to manipulate or subvert expectations of success, and to bring about cognitive change. In most design disciplines co-operation and collaboration are intrinsic to the process and realisation of ideas and artefacts but, while co-operation can be defined "as an exchange in which the participants benefit from the encounter" (Sennett, 2012: 5), collectivism offers design a new, more polyphonic direction. Internal (academic) and external (professional) structures are considered next as mirrors or exemplars for future modulations of pedagogic practice: the social relations of power, discipline and coercion that shape student experience in the hidden curriculum if they remain unchallenged may be repeated and reinforced within design studios and client relations.

5.1 Collective Authorship

The collective is framed here as a 'community of intent' (Vaughan, 2012), which reflects more accurately the social reality of its audience and works *with* them. Internally inclusive marked by dialogic discourse reflecting the uncertain space in which design is developed, produced and disseminated. The dialogic 'counter-hegemonic' (Kester, 2004: 115) challenges "dominant representations of a given community and [helps to] create a more complex understanding and empathy" with the broader public (Dodd, 2012: 62). An internal-external discourse opens transmission to more convivial or hospitable modes of giving *back* in an "exchange of authorship or creative" (Dodd, 2012: 62). As an example, Tania Bruguera's recent Hyundai Turbine Hall Commission for Tate Modern (London) in 2018 "seeks to revive collective social responsibility and common purpose through deliberation and public commitments" with Tate Neighbours (Tate, 2018). Dialogic in approach, the artist worked with the community living adjacent to the gallery to devise a manifesto and 'Terms and Conditions' (Tate, 2018), inviting more neighbourly action from those visiting the gallery and using Tate's free WiFi:

We advocate for the right for all to be different but equal. We believe that oppressed communities contribute culturally, socially and politically to the betterment of all. In times when thoughts and words are not enough, actions must become our common language.

In addition to the collective local voice being embedded in the gallery's digital portal, the most notable action in the public domain, emerging from the commission has been the renaming of Tate's Boiler House (for one year) in honour of local activist Natalie Bell. Assemble (founded in 2010) became the first collective to win the Turner Prize in 2016 for their work across art, design and architecture, in collaboration with a local community in Liverpool. The field of this collective action is *internal* (within the group itself) and *external*, within social contexts, which are open and participatory. Assemble's collective system is connected for socio-economic benefit with flexible team members activating the multivalent touch points required for the audience or local community, in a similarly reciprocal approach to Brughera and the Tate Neighbours' collaboration (Tate, 2018). There are diverse motivations for collective practice in the arts and design. For the Guerilla Girls' fluid membership (formed in 1985), anonymity has been exploited as a strategic rejection of individual identity in a corporate art market that explicitly preferences male artists. Pseudonyms (usually of dead female artists) are adopted and gorilla masks worn to produce and reproduce the collective 'brand' while enjoying the freedom of their alter ego's voices. By deferring attention from the artist under the mask the collective's messages gain primary significance.

Mattias Muller (Muller, et al, 2017: 37) links historical models of shared/communal living to the emergence of a social movement embracing collectivity and a sharing economy in architecture. Sharing resources at micro and macro levels, amongst a local group or via online networks (such as Airbnb, sofa surfing, flat swapping) represents a shift in social values away from individual ownership, which Muller *et al.* (2017: 37) argue is due to "changing demographics and the renaissance of the city as a hub for a collectivity". In a crisis-orientated culture, a collective sensibility and social structure provides the most generative conditions for polyphonic design praxis, whether in response to socio-economic austerity, urbanism (architectural collectives), the patriarchal bias of market forces controlling creative recognition (Guerilla Girls) or the socio-political inequalities of higher education. In

an adaptable formation each collective is able to unmake and remake itself, determined by the 'causal relationships' in each group: the dynamics of the relationships in the group define the shape and purpose of each group, participants seek to learn more than they currently know, together. The collective is a social site in which difference is assembled to facilitate creativity and inspirational discovery produced by creative and collective participation in a 'constant becoming' (Wenger, 1999: 151). Instead of pitting students and design practitioners against each other in a battle for (high) grades, awards, opportunities to win, the adaptable social structure of the collective benefits the individual *and* the group.

6 Polyphonic Praxis

Polyphonic praxis is defined simply as a multivocal theory for design explored and tested through practice and pedagogy, followed by analysis and reflection: an action, a group of distinct voices and a democratic social structure for critical and creative practices, simultaneously combining a number of parts, each forming an individual melody and harmonizing with each other. In this context, the processes of discourse and the social production knowledge are framed as meaningful, independent outcomes. Staff and students are both actors in the structural organisation of the collective, co-researchers in the productive philosophies of the socio-creative unit: defined as reflexive, critical and inclusive. Critical discourse interrupts the efficient consumption of information, seeking to unsettle and destabilise "forms – diffused, naturalized, and habitual – that instil colonial relations of power" (Schultz, et al., 2018: 3). A critical consciousness facilitates active learning in an emancipatory *transformation* through collective political struggle, which occurs alongside more explicit formal teaching and learning methods. Tutors must share in the responsibility to invoke change by preparing the social space of learning, attentive to the underlying bias of tacit knowledge and the hidden curriculum. In this context collaboration and co-production are framed as "both a methodology and a political position" (Vaughan, 2012: 10). In the discipline's globalized territory, public debates have for a long time used 'multicultural' and 'diversity' as badges of ethical authenticity, yet biased attitudes, ideologies and philosophies persist within capitalist discourse which neutralises in the process of naming and claiming autonomous difference. Can or will academic programmes and procedures adapt to address socio-cultural and economic bias in classrooms, methodologies – or is a radical disruption needed as Decolonising Design (2018) suggest?

In promoting the value of a polyphonic modality for design, an adaptable set of terms and tools is required to describe and inscribe new discursive terms of engagement within a collective 'turn', which exploits the creative potential of diversity (Vaughan, 2012: 15). The polyphonic modality of design authorship and articulation is distinct from hook's (1994) 'rainbow coalition' in which difference is neutralised, leading to inequalities and a monovocal culture. Sennet (2012) frames the orchestra as a co-operative group endeavour in which each member has a key role to play independently, which is then transferred to the collective project at rehearsal wherein different voices or performers coalesce. New labels and alternative terms must be applied with a critical consciousness to the sphere of design discourse lest the names lose their independent significance as another adjunct (Decolonising Design, 2018), a catchy heading for an institutional rebranding exercise.

The collective 'turn' is dependent on radical change from *all* those who hold power: a transformative praxis of "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (Freire, 1993: 126) because authorial aspirations may end up reinforcing conservative notions of design production and subjectivity. The collective value of design must be introduced to students through a reconfigured curriculum, assessment processes which value the collective, artefacts and messages that give a critical voice and visual form to polyphonic design. In the classroom/studio, attention to who is speaking, what position is being taken and on whose behalf, must be framed as core concerns rather than as additional or liminal interests. With greater socio-political consciousness, the classroom/studio is envisioned as a site where new knowledge, the experiences of students and teachers alike, is produced through inclusive dialogue, not only in terms of voices heard, but also in decolonised historical narratives of design (hooks, 1994). New foundations and formulae are fundamental to the ethical, intellectual, critical and social integrity of design.

7 Conclusions

The immaterial values and political undercurrents of our world are inscribed into historical accounts of design as epistemological truths, embodied in its artefacts, aesthetics and pedagogies. Design pedagogic practices are therefore significant spaces for formulating or questioning the discipline's ideologies and epistemological boundaries. Through critical reflection on the socio-cultural strata of design history and discourses a bias towards neutrality is revealed, reinforcing universal worldviews of design, which are fundamentally eurocentric.

The pedagogic design collective is conceived as coalescing the value of different voices from tangential backgrounds in a polyphonic praxis in a shared form of graphic authorship. In the design studio or conference stage, greater polyphony is best delivered from a collective sensibility and social structure. However, any alternative form of pedagogy, progressive notion of learning must be accompanied by pedagogical relationships marked by dialogic questioning, communication and transformative action (Giroux, 2012: 38). The emergence of collective social power explored in this proposal is framed as a methodological antidote to the homogeneity and monovocal tendencies of current market-led practices in (graphic) design practice and pedagogy. Within the collective, more generative plural modes of design discourse can be developed by the inter-dependent nature of collaborative practices, which work to disrupt the centre/marginal, mainstream/alternative dichotomies of capitalist culture and the neoliberal university. Both design's history and its future can be unpicked and remade, by disconnecting and redirecting the discipline from established matrices of power inscribed into the hidden curriculum (hooks, 1994; Decolonising Design, 2018).

This paper has examined cooperative and collaborative alternatives to design's entrenched culture of competition and drive to win awards and big client contracts, that ultimately diminish genuine difference and diversity. For Freire (1970) and hooks (1994) academia has fundamentally failed in its promise of authentic social mobility and multicultural emancipation. Within complex socio-economic conditions, this is partly due to the dominant authority of the (white male), who produce and reproduce socially-biased power structures orientated towards hegemonic norms; partly due to the Eurocentric orientation of (modernist) design aesthetics and principles; partly due to the inherent privileges and marginalisation of voices in the hidden curriculum.

The collective is framed as an untapped source of agency and impact derived from a synergy of diverse participants in a collaborative and co-operative formation. The collective social structure goes further than participation and co-operation by seeking the tension of different voices. 'Polyphony' is employed, here, as a term for disrupting compliant bourgeois notions of 'diversity' in academia, initiating a shift in focus, from the heroic individual, to a collective articulation of the discipline's social and intellectual possibilities. Sennett's (2012) notion of the orchestra is framed as an adaptable collective model for design, in which distinct voices coalesce in a shared endeavour. But, more models of the design collective are needed, to disrupt the imbalances of power and expression within academia and professional practice. Without a radical reconfiguration of (critical) design practices, from its foundational pedagogic frameworks, a polyphonic modality of new design voices in the discipline will remain as superficial as the next paradigmatic change.

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