

## Research summary and question

This research project dismantles and problematizes the trope of collaboration within the contemporary design landscape. By looking at specific cases that dilute the position of the designer, such as the *workshop*, the *platform* and the *tool* this research aims to develop and foster articulations around design that do not assume or affirm design.

In my inquiry of different positionalities within collaborative environments I build upon theories of design that refer to Chantal Mouffe's work on agonism, advocating an approach to design that privileges difference. By paying attention to processes of design (rather than final results or products of design) these adversarial<sup>1</sup>, dissenting<sup>2</sup> and contestational<sup>3</sup> approaches to design call attention to the importance of incorporating different positions in a design process.

While the pluralist lens offers means of resisting generalisation it also presupposes that positions are clearly defined, and apparent. The way this pluralist lens is applied by design theoreticians and practitioners positions design as an instrument for (social) change and as it would argue takes part in reproducing the common assumption of design's ability to solve issues. In order to fundamentally question design however, design itself needs to be moved away from the center of attention.

To complicate the pluralistic approach of understanding collaboration in design – being and working together in difference, this research is pursued from a multilayered position. It is from a position of convoluted involvements, transgressing boundaries of disciplines, methods, formats that I investigate the conditions and implications of working with *others* – including other human beings but also digital objects.

The central question that underlies this research is: What happens after the dilution of design?

With this dissertation I intend to develop a grammar of sorts that allows me and other design practitioners to approach fundamental questions such as: Are we still designing? If we are not, or we can't be sure, how do we define, defend and critique our practices? How can we hold and be held accountable? And if we are, don't we need to expand our understanding of design and the ways we articulate it?". Drawing from three cases from my own experience with collaborative practice, I investigate how situations during which design blends together with other practices, experiences, and subjectivities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Carl DiSalvo

<sup>2</sup> Sofia Bempeza, Mahmoud Keshavarz, Ramia Mazé

<sup>3</sup> Tad Hirsch