Design Activism in South Africa: Design Interventions as Invented Spaces to Encourage Activist Citizenship

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Introduction

Design as a vehicle for social and political intervention is not a recent invention. There are many historical precedents of design interventions as reform or resistance, specifically during times of social unrest and economic instability. The call for design reform by the likes of William Morris at the turn of the twentieth century and later Buckminster Fuller and Victor Papanek serve as important milestones in this regard.[1] Similarly, antidesign movements in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s, Ken Garland's *First Things First* manifesto, and the work of Adbusters in the 1990s speak to the notion of design as advocacy. Moreover, since the so-called reflective turn in design from the 1980s, the discipline has witnessed a broader conceptualization. No longer defined solely as a material practice that results from rational problem-solving activities, design's political power is being harnessed more intentionally to lead sustainable social change. The implication for designers is that they are not concerned merely with the functional and aesthetic sensibility of their work when innovating solutions but are increasingly concerned with the relationships and interactions of their design outcomes in the broader social, economic, ecological, and political contexts in which they exist. This stance highlights design as a situated practice in the real world, which in turn emphasizes design's particular and probable nature that lends itself to tackling wicked problems in more relevant and appropriate ways.

To be accountable and contribute to a more sustainable and just society, contemporary design practice comprises collaborative and process-driven practices. The drive toward a human-centered and socially responsible design ethos has enabled a host of design theories and practices to date.[2]

However, the gamut of contemporary design approaches —including but not restricted to co-design, participatory design, service design, adversarial design, and design activism—have different teleological foundations.[3] Although it is not the intention

1 See Grace Lees-Maffei, "Reflections on Design Activism and Social Change," *Design Issues* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 90–92.

2 For human-centered design, see Richard Buchanan, "Human Dignity and Human Rights: Thoughts on the Principles of Human-Centered Design," *Design Issues* 17, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 35–39.

3 Alistair Fuad-Luke, "Design Activism's Teleological Freedoms as a Means to Transform Our Habitus," in *Agents of Alternatives: Re-designing Our Realities*, Alistair Fuad-Luke, Anja-Lisa Hirscher, and Katherina Moebus, eds. (Berlin: Agents of Alternatives, 2015), 280–95.

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of this article to unpack the purposes of these approaches, design activism and social design are differentiated to elucidate a theoretical framework.

Fuad-Luke succinctly articulates the conceptual distinction between design activism and social design; according to him,

> design activism is grounded in proposing, seeking and developing 'alternatives', whereas the context of social design is driven by the agendas of the key stakeholders, especially the government, providers (of services, products, materials) and grass root innovators. The attitudes and activities of social design have an underlying pragmatism, looking for effective outputs, capacity building and to developing capabilities and wise use of assets. In contrast, design activism reveals an ideological, experimental and more radical remit around contestation and asks, *What could be?*[4]

Following this distinction, this article explores what design activism could offer acts of citizenship in a South African context. Accordingly, I draw on Fuad-Luke's definition, which characterizes design activism as "design thinking, imagination and practice applied knowingly or unknowingly to create a counter-narrative aimed at generating and balancing positive, social, institutional, environmental and/or economic change."[5] The creation of a counternarrative is also recognized by Markussen as being specifically a design act, "a designerly way of intervening in people's lives," and "not a boycott, strike, protest, demonstration, or some other political act."[6] This article follows Markussen, Knutz, and Lenskjol's lead of recognizing design activism by its *modus operandi*.[7] Thus, design activism's practice of disrupting the status quo supports its consideration here as a stimulus for acts of citizenship.

In line with the prognostic stance that is evident in design activism literature, I argue that design interventions—as instances of design activism—facilitate spaces of citizenship beyond the traditional political arena. To this end, the study historically traces the construction of citizenship in South Africa before outlining some examples of how design and citizenship are currently interfaced in a local context. The definitions of key terms are informed by scholarship on citizenship: Isin's typology of active and activist citizenship is considered alongside Miraftab's mutually constitutive concepts of invented and invited spaces of citizenship.[8]

Next, the operational nature of design interventions is considered by presenting the particularities of the South African design interventions. The discussion is supported by empirical evidence from fieldwork for a larger research study that explored the notion

4 Ibid., 284.

5 Alistair Fuad-Luke, *Design Activism: Beautiful Strangeness for a Sustainable World* (London: Earthscan, 2009), 786, Kindle.

6 Thomas Markussen, "The Disruptive Aesthetics of Design Activism: Enacting Design Between Art and Politics," *Design Issues* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 38.

7 Thomas Markussen, Eva Knutz, and Tau Lenskjold, "Design Activism as a New Method for Inquiring into Mixed Emotions in Uncomfortable Social Interaction," in *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Design & Emotion*, P.M.A. Desmet, S. Fokkinga, G. Ludden, N. Cila, and H. van Zuthem (eds.) (Delft: Design & Emotion Society, 2016), 256–65.

8 Engin F. Isin, "Citizenship in Flux: The Figure of the Activist Citizen," *Subjectivity* 29 (2009): 367–88; Faranak Miraftab, "Invited and Invented Spaces of Participation: Neoliberal Citizenship and Feminists' Expanded Notion of Politics," *Wagadu* 1 (2004): 1–7.

of design citizenship through a design activism lens.[9] A constructivist grounded theory research design was used[10] ; intensive, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 31 consenting research participants in two South African cities to examine their involvement and experience with design interventions. Like the larger study, the focus of this article is not on analyzing the design interventions but on unpacking the actions and experiences they presented to participants. Accordingly, the concluding section includes a discussion on how the design interventions facilitated alternate spaces of citizenship and the civic affordances thereof.

Situating South African Citizenship and Spaces of Citizenship

The basic assumption of citizenship is how people coexist in a national, political community. However, the term is conceptually loaded. This is especially true in a country like South Africa, given its colonial and apartheid past. Even though policies of racial segregation were unmistakable in South Africa during Dutch and British colonial rule, the first objective of this article is to briefly trace the historical construction of national citizenship from the apartheid regime (1948–1994) to current democratic South Africa. The intent is to ground the subsequent discussion on local cases of South African design activism to critically consider how design activism may contribute to reimagining citizenship in more proactive and constructive ways.

From the onset of the apartheid regime, citizenship was institutionalized as a tool of racial exclusion. A social stratification was created across racial lines; the minority white population was favored at the expense of people of color (Indians, Coloreds, and black Africans). White South Africans were provided with full citizenship status, meaning access to all national privileges with related rights and responsibilities. In contrast, people of color were marginalized and excluded from formal acts of citizenship, such as voting. Spatially, citizens of color had limited mobility and were excluded from lawful residences in racially segregated areas. Citizenship education alike was informed by an ideology based on accentuating differences. According to Mekoa and Melope, "the apartheid education sought to block the emergence of a common citizenship."[11] Across all spheres, the categorical nature of citizenship under apartheid subscribed to an individualized form of citizenship: a narrow and linear practice of citizenship where citizenship acts were underscored by citizens interacting with the state instead of citizens interacting with one another. Citizen actions were defined by macropolitical qualities such as nationality and rules of access, which are characteristic of traditional or formal conceptions of citizenship.

9 Fatima Cassim, "From Empowerment to Emancipation: An Exploration of Design Citizenship through Design Activism in South Africa" PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2018.

10 Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2014).

11 Itumeleng Mekoa and Mokgadi Molope, "Towards an Education for Common Citizenship in the Post-Apartheid South Africa: Negotiating Difference," *Gender and Behaviour* 16, no. 2 (2018): 11441.

When the apartheid regime was dismantled in 1994, there was an earnest "national desire for reconciliation, most often expressed as the need for nation-building."[12] Thus, postapartheid citizenship rhetoric is concentrated more on the creation of a common culture and less on a common South African citizenship. The adoption of the term "rainbow nation," for example, alludes to a desire to move from apartheid's strict black-and-white mindset toward multiculturalism. The humanist African philosophy of *ubuntu*, which affirms that "a person is a person through other persons,"[13] further inspired the rainbow metaphor. While a rainbow is an optimistic metaphor, it sugar-coats the reality on the ground. Mamdani's view that postcolonial states in Africa are not democratized albeit being deracialized is true in a country like South Africa.[14] More than twenty years after democracy, the vision of civic equality—a commitment to human dignity and human rights as affirmed in the preamble of the new constitution—remains unfulfilled. Social inequalities abound, and poor and working-class citizens in particular are faced with a plethora of social justice challenges. As such, the anti-apartheid initiatives that were the primary concern before 1994 have shifted. The "social justice projects in South Africa [now] concern themselves with economic justice, public participation and socio-economic rights, accountability and improved access to services in a range of different sectors."[15]

The effects of poor spatial logic/urban planning (specifically in informal settlements), lack of sanitation, limited governmental budgets and resource allocation, and an inadequate criminal justice system that includes safety and policing have tainted South Africans' opinions of the ruling party. The African National Congress (ANC) is no longer regarded as the voice of the people because the party tries to silence dissenters. This type of civic distrust and disinterest is not limited to South Africa. Worldwide, there has been political mobilization on a massive scale. The Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, #BlackLivesMatter, and #FeesMustFall are just some examples of how citizens unite to demand justice.[16] Not only do these movements highlight social justice as a civic value, but they also illustrate how the internet and social media platforms have spurred on a broader reconfiguration of citizenship practices.

This broader conceptualization of citizenship moves away from the traditional state-centric focus and toward the people, that is, the citizens. Hence, nuanced forms and definitions of citizens and citizenship, which are increasingly inclusive and nonhierarchical, have emerged. As demonstrated by prefixes for citizenship—such as "participatory,"[17] "inclusive,"[18] and "insurgent"[19]—contemporary citizenship theory is dynamic and "embedded in current social and political struggles that constitute it."[20] In this regard, Isin's typology of active citizenship and activist citizenship is useful for communicating the fluid structure of citizenship.

12 Ibid., 11445.

13 Heike Winschiers-Theophilus, Nicola J. Bidwell, and Edwin Blake, "Community Consensus: Design Beyond Participation," *Design Issues* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 89–100.

14 Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

15 "What Is Social Justice?" Social Justice Initiative, https://sji.org.za/what-is-social-justice/ (accessed November 13, 2022).

16 #FeesMustFall is a student-led protest at tertiary institutions in South Africa in reaction to increasing tuition fees. This movement began in 2015 and has seen several revivals.

17 John Gaventa, "Exploring Citizenship, Participation and Accountability," *IDS Bulletin* 33, no. 2 (2002): 1–11.

18 Naila Kabeer, *Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and Expressions* (London: Zed, 2005).

19 James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

20 Engin F. Isin, "Citizenship in Flux: The Figure of the Activist Citizen," *Subjectivity* 29 (2009): 370.

According to Isin, "active citizenship has become a script for already existing citizens to follow already existing paths. It is most often used to denote the kinds of behavior that citizens ostensibly follow. Thus, it is always tied into governmental practices through which conduct is produced."[21] Active citizenship is therefore concentrated in a formal arena of politics. Likewise, active citizenship is interfaced with social design by way of state-commissioned design deliverables. The design of ballot papers and local government election campaigns, which are categorized as design for democracy,[22] operate in a top-down way to facilitate acts of citizenship. Weber critiques state-commissioned designed initiatives for undermining citizenship; she asserts that they serve as instruments for managed intervention and good governance instead of empowering citizens to have their voices heard.[23] Following this critique, Cape Town's World Design Capital designation in 2014 is noteworthy.

Elsewhere I explored the World Design Capital designation by engaging with urban design and creative city scholarship in a global paradigm.[24] After winning the bid, and prior to the appointed term, I proposed theoretically how the design designation may offer citizens a right to the city per Lefebvre's conception of the term. In hindsight, the aim of transforming Cape Town by design was too ambitious. The spaces of participation became exclusionary, and the numerous projects and events largely pandered to government and private-sector interests. The focus was on design's utilitarian properties, which inevitably promoted its function as form and not an attitude or mode of reasoning. Despite its place-based approach as a "worlding device,"[25] it also called into question the difference between universal and particular design approaches for socially responsible design. Moreover, according to one participant, the platforms for engagement saw "design work [being done] on behalf of others or [on behalf of] people who can't . . . speak for themselves."[26] In light of this, the designation became more of a political accomplishment than a public one. Similarly, the spaces of engagement that were created became what Miraftab calls "invited spaces" of citizenship.[27] As the name suggests, invited spaces "are defined as the ones occupied by those grassroots and their allied non-governmental organizations that are legitimized by donors and government interventions."[28]

In contrast to social design initiatives that fall under the rubric of invited spaces of participation and are likely to render citizens as being active, this article is aligned with the concept of invented spaces of citizenship. The aim here is not to espouse a binary classification of citizenship but to delineate my position. The notion of invented spaces of citizenship is associated with collective civic action that is counter-hegemonic[29]; they are spaces formed from

21 Ibid., 383.

22 Marcia Lausen, *Design for Democracy: Ballot and Election Design* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

23 Cynthia Weber, "Introduction: Design and Citizenship," *Citizenship Studies* 14, no. 1 (2010): 1–16.

24 Fatima Cassim, "Finding the Mother in the Mother City: Reclaiming Cape Town through Design," *Image & Text*, no. 21 (2013): 122–39.

25 The term "worlding" is attributed to A. Roy and A. Ong, *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); for worlding in a South African context, see Laura Nkula-Wenz, "Worlding Cape Town by Design: Encounters with Creative Cityness," *Economy and Space* 51, no. 3 (2019): 581–97.

26 Interview with participant 7, April 22, 2015, Cape Town; conducted as part of author's fieldwork.

27 Faranak Miraftab, "Invited and Invented Spaces of Participation: Neoliberal Citizenship and Feminists' Expanded Notion of Politics," *Wagadu* 1 (2004): 1–7.

28 Ibid., 1.

29 Ibid.

the bottom up, by the citizens for the citizens. In this context, the process of citizenship is spotlighted, rather than its outcome. This type of citizenship points to the concept of activist citizenship. According to Isin, activist citizenship denotes "acts that transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and modes (citizens, strangers, outsiders, aliens) of being political by bringing into being new actors as activist citizens (that is, claimants of rights) through creating or transforming sites and stretching scales."[30]

Isin's conception of citizenship as acts, beyond the status and habitus of citizenship, to include various sites, scales, and actors resonates with Jamieson, Pendlebury, and Bray's sentiment that civic engagement has broadened beyond the scope of electoral politics to include the notion of having one's voice heard.[31] Using this broader conception of citizenship as the point of departure, the next section explores how South African instances of design activism produced the actors and sites for activist citizenship.

The Nature of the South African Design Interventions

In contemporary design discourse, design activism has theoretical variances, with approaches ranging from theoretical by Thorpe and Julier to more pragmatic by Fuad-Luke and Markussen.[32] Markussen's framework is explicitly philosophical; his aesthetics-based framework is premised on Jacques Rancière's philosophy of the inextricable link between politics and aesthetics.[33] Despite the varied approaches, two commonalities are apparent in the theory: the authors' respective vantage points are all premised on the idea of design activism as a sociopolitical practice, and there is a shared understanding of the nature of design interventions. Essentially, the term "intervention" denotes an action to improve or aid a difficult situation, literally, a coming between. As such, the South African design interventions are positioned as context-specific, creative vehicles that prompted public engagement on a particular social cause/issue. Here, the use of the term "context-specific" reveals a dual meaning.

First, the context of the respective design interventions denotes a setting or location. Since the design interventions emerged out of actual community needs and provoked action in the real world, they played out *in situ* in two South African cities, Pretoria and Cape Town.[34] For example, in Pretoria, the Feast of the Clowns is an inner-city intervention that's pitched as a festival. The festival adopts a different theme each year and is recognized for its commitment to community building and improving social cohesion. A Cape Town example is a city walk that was implemented in the central business district as a placemaking initiative. Owing to Cape Town's increased destination and tourism marketing after the FIFA World

30 Engin F. Isin, "Citizenship in Flux: The Figure of the Activist Citizen," *Subjectivity* 29 (2009): 383.

31 Lucy Jamieson, Shirley Pendlebury, and Rachel Bray, "Conclusion: Children as Citizens," in *South African Child Gauge 2010/2011*, Lucy Jamieson, Rachel Bray, André Viviers, Lori Lake, Shirley Pendlebury, and Charmaine Smith (eds.) (Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, 2011), 70.

32 See Anne Thorpe, "Defining Design as Activism," http://designactivism.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Thorpe-definingdesignactivism.pdf (accessed June 14, 2014); Guy Julier, "Introduction: Material Preference and Design Activism," *Design and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2013): 145–50; Guy Julier, "From Design Culture to Design Activism," *Design and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2013): 215–36; Fuad-Luke, *Design Activism*; Markussen, "Disruptive Aesthetics."

33 See Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, ed. Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum, 2004).

34 Although it is not the focus of this article, it should be acknowledged that it is not uncommon for interventions to be realized in a digital realm, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic, which facilitated an unprecedented shift to virtual platforms of engagement.

Cup hosted in South Africa in 2010, the aim was to encourage citizens to contribute directly to the inner city in an attempt for them to see it as their own space. In these cities, the local scale of the interventions (as opposed to those on a national level) ensured that the participants had clarity and firsthand experience of the social issue. One participant asserted that it was necessary to take citizens "out of hiding"[35] so that the interventions would be informed by actual needs instead of the perceived needs of a given community.

Second, the context of each design intervention denotes its configuration. The interventions did not subscribe to a pregiven form; they each comprised material and immaterial design objects such as prompts, probes, and provocations. Essentially, the objects of disruption did not stem from an overt interest in political activism; they were assembled out of a concern for social justice issues. For example, ineffective waste management systems and early childhood development were two issues addressed during the interventions with communities living in an informal settlement in Cape Town.[36] The interventions were modeled on the concept of a "design hack."[37] The hacking format was adopted to redistribute power to the people: it gave them a chance to raise their voices and most notably to jump-start their imaginations.

What became apparent from the interventions under investigation was that a shared interest in a particular social issue informed the assembly of human resources for a design intervention. Four overarching participant categories were identified as the key actors who constituted the particular public for the design interventions under investigation: designers, citizen participants,[38] public officials, and corporate/private officials. In a South African context, these actors coming together is significant because they would not necessarily interact with each other under other circumstances. The effect of coming together was recognized by one actor who noted the following: ". . . people sharing space that normally is not shared because of all the historical, political and geographic reasons [in South Africa]. So, I mean to me . . . that's a very powerful start."[39]

Notwithstanding the importance of sharing a space, each actor's extent of participation is variable because of each one's different supportive levels for an intervention. The human resources are also bound by "the type of power structures they work with, for or against."[40] Nonetheless, when the different groups of actors converged, or in other words once they all "plugged in," an engagement site was realized for each intervention, and a communal platform for engagement was subsequently activated. The theoretical category of "plugging in"[41] that emerged from the data draws on the nature and purpose of a software component called a plug-in, which connotes a resource that can run independently but

35 Interview with participant 2, April 16, 2015, Cape Town; conducted as part of author's fieldwork.

36 Rebecca Davis, "Talking Township Trash," *Daily Maverick*, July 2, 2012, http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-07-02-talking-township-trash/#VRMVhVvFH-Y; David Archer, "Design Storming 2013: Complex Developmental Challenges are Best Solved Together," Cape Town Partnership, http://www.capetownpartnership.co.za/2013/09/design-storming-2013-complex-development-challenges-are-best-solved-together/ (accessed March 25, 2015).

37 See Scott Burnham, "Finding the Truth in Systems: In Praise of Design-Hacking," RSA Design & Society, http://www.scott-burnham.com/files/Scott-Burnham-Hacking-Design-2009.pdf (accessed March 25, 2015).

38 For purposes of this article, the citizen participants who acted in an activist capacity are not akin to political subjects who are activists.

39 Interview with participant 20, June 30, 2015, Skype; conducted as part of author's fieldwork.

40 Fuad-Luke, "Design Activism's Teleological Freedoms," 284–85.

41 Cassim, "From Empowerment to Emancipation," 81.

enhances a host application's functionality when run together. Likewise, the assembly of actors for the interventions drew on the actors' individual capabilities.

While all four actors played a key role, the fieldwork established that the designers were instrumental in drawing on their tacit, design knowledge to create spaces that encourage dialogue and action, thereby also encouraging more citizens to be proactive. One designer recognized his contribution by stating that "design activism is about trying to tap into what we do naturally."[42] Similarly, another participant noted that "it's just part of their DNA [designer's] to sort of think outside of the box and kind of disrupt."[43] Significantly, the recognition of the actors' inherent creativity was not restricted to the designers; other actors also recognized their potential through participation. One citizen actor realized that she also has the "know-how"; this newfound appreciation of her own capabilities came through clearly when she spoke collectively about her community's involvement in two design hacks in Cape Town: it "open[ed] our minds about the ways of doing somethings."[44]

Overall, the common sentiment by the actors was that design offered an "asset-based approach" to tackling problems. This approach resonates with an "asset-based community development"[45] methodology, where development rests on the strengths of the organizers who motivate other community members to action. Owing to a scarcity of resources in South Africa, especially in informal settlements, this approach has value because "it encourages communities to use their existing skills and resources and thereby has the potential to empower them."[46] It was therefore significant when one actor noted the following with regard to how design interventions bring various actors together: "people will find one another across their differences and find each other's differences stimulating in terms of their own production. So that suddenly . . . they are augmented by one another. So that their range of capacities are extended."[47] Another actor noted that "there is dignity to be found in being able to speak about your lived experience. I think it's empowering to actually be in a space where you can also try and think through what the potential solutions to that might be and might look like."[48]

As mentioned already, in addition to speaking about one's lived experiences, the design interventions facilitated active imagining. For this purpose, the actors used design tools for ideation, such as brainstorming, mind-mapping, and sketching. Even though the designers may have initiated and introduced the design and visualization tools, the subsequent creative process rendered the actors as being active producers instead of passive consumers of other people's ideas. In this way, the creative consultations among the actors facilitated context-appropriate narratives of alternate futures that

42 Interview with participant 2, April 16, 2015, Cape Town; conducted as part of author's fieldwork.

43 Interview with participant 7, April 22, 2015, Cape Town; conducted as part of author's fieldwork.

44 Interview with participant 15, May 14, 2015, Cape Town; conducted as part of author's fieldwork.

45 John Kretzmann and John McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Chicago: ACTA, 1993).

46 Cassim, "From Empowerment to Emancipation," 83.

47 Interview with participant 6, April 21, 2015, Cape Town; conducted as part of author's fieldwork.

48 Interview with participant 23, July 3, 2015, Cape Town; conducted as part of author's fieldwork.

were not at risk of being scripted in a top-down way. Moreover, participating in the design interventions provided the actors with an experiential learning opportunity to nurture abductive modes of reasoning to tackle complex social issues.[49]

The act of imagining alternate futures is key to John Wood's viewpoint about the value of collective and creative optimism for new forms of governance and thereby the democratic transformation of societies.[50] Wood suggests that societies are quick to protest but are not proactive enough in envisioning their real needs and wants. Despite this European position, Wood's viewpoint acutely captures the culture of protesting in democratic South Africa. Even though the protest culture can be traced to past colonial and apartheid regimes, it is so prevalent currently that the country is often dubbed a "protest nation."[51] Even though protests are indicative of wanting one's voice to be heard, the nature of such engagement often results in civil unrest and destructive behavior. As such, by engaging in a direct confrontation regarding the status quo, the South African actors experienced significant realizations of the benefits of being a proactive member of one's own community and being pragmatic about social change.

Discussion and Conclusion

As a process of disruptive aesthetics, the South African instances of design activism involved redistributing actors and sites of citizenship. In essence, this restructuring of acts of citizenship via design challenges traditional readings of citizenship and corresponds to Isin's conception of activist citizenship in several ways.

To begin with, the design interventions served as a strategy for civic mobilization. They opened citizenship spaces that may have otherwise been inaccessible to Pretoria and Cape Town citizens. For instance, immigrants without citizenship status in South Africa are excluded from the formal arena of politics; African immigrants in particular are at risk of experiencing xenophobia. By producing the actors as claimants of rights, irrespective of their legal status, activist citizenship facilitated new subjectivities beyond the state. The interventions opened space for all to be proactive in ways that shaped their membership in a community. The empirical evidence also illustrates how citizenship was enacted in everyday acts, such as walking in the city and managing domestic tasks like waste management. In this way, design interventions emphasized acts of citizenship in relation to spaces that shape people's everyday reality. These alternate sites of engagement disrupted not only the physical spaces of traditional citizenship but also the head spaces of the actors.

49 See Kees Dorst, "The Core of Design Thinking and Its Application," *Design Studies* 32, no. 6 (2011): 521–32.

50 John Wood, *Design for Micro-Utopias: Making the Unthinkable Possible* (Farnham: Gower, 2007).

51 Jane Duncan, *Protest Nation: The Right to Protest in South Africa* (Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016).

Furthermore, by engaging citizens through smaller, creative acts of citizenship, the engagement among actors was dialogic. The opportunity for sharing stories and ideas using convivial design tools helped the actors have their voices heard. Such a configuration addresses Wood's observation that even though citizens have the capacity to think critically, they lack the tools to articulate or consider what they want in more direct ways. By thinking like designers, and imagining what Wood calls "micro-utopias," it was apparent that the alternate futures imagined by the actors challenged individualistic needs and embraced a plurality of responses. The micro-utopias facilitated constructive argumentation, and the habitus of the actors was broken and dissensus was invited and welcomed. This type of collective civic action once again highlights design intervention's characterization as an invented space of citizenship.

Overall, the process-oriented approach of the design interventions echoes DiSalvo's notion of a speculative intervention which, according to Tironi, "moves away from the instrumentalism that uses design to package solutions or pre-set issues, and instead produces elements with which to speculate about other things and matters of concern."[52] Hence, design as a way of thinking (and not merely a function) enabled the actors to learn more about themselves, each other, and ultimately the social issue at hand. The social justice–related content of the design interventions points to Tony Fry's assertion that design is politically-based on a common cause rather than a political ideology.[53] With regard to how design activism and activist citizenship were interfaced, there is a strong similarity in how both actions encouraged the actors to act on their current situations to transform them into better ones. It can be inferred that the design interventions are scaffolded by the design act of framing, namely, the creation of a novel standpoint from which to tackle a problem.[54]

In turn, the interventions did not merely attempt to answer topical issues as a way to put them to rest; instead, their aim was to raise relevant and appropriate questions that prompted reflection and action. A similar argument is put forward by Halse and Boffi, who maintain that design interventions "are increasingly seen as a research method, not to test a prefigured solution to a defined problem, but to enable new forms of experience, dialogue and awareness about the problematic to emerge."[55] Informed by this understanding, the intention of imagining counter-narratives, as opposed to acts of resistance, is critical. The term "desiderata," which denotes intention, is articulated by Nelson and Stolterman as an aggregate of aesthetics, ethics, and reason and form the "imperative

52 Martín Tironi, "Speculative Prototyping, Frictions and Counter-Participation: A Civic Intervention with Homeless Individuals," *Design Studies* 59 (2018): 117.

53 Tony Fry, *Design as Politics* (Oxford: Berg, 2010).

54 Kees Dorst, *Frame Innovation: Create New Thinking by Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

55 Joachim Halse and Laura Boffi, "Design Interventions as a Form of Inquiry," in *Design Anthropological Futures*, Rachel Charlotte Smith, Kasper Tang Vangkilde, Mette Gislev Kjærsgaard, Ton Otto, Joachim Halse, and Thomas Binder (eds.) (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 2247, Kindle.

voice of design."[56] The intentional nature of the sample of design interventions also makes visible Nelson and Stolterman's distinction between the acts of finding and making meaning. Whereas the act of finding meaning results in reactive behavior and fleeting engagements, the process of making meaning during the interventions was a hands-on activity that strengthened engagement among the actors.

According to Nelson and Stolterman, the act of making meaning also has the potential to sustain commitment. However, having outlined the opportunities that design activism may offer citizenship, it must be acknowledged that the outcome and success of any design intervention creating an invented space for activist citizenship is not a given. Although it is evident that activating a design intervention enabled the actors and the sites for citizenship, and thereby set the tone for participation and design facilitation, they precede the effect of the acts of activist citizenship. Ultimately, time, funding, and continued action are variables that will determine whether the imagined social change takes shape. As noted with the World Design Capital, it's clear that misaligned intentions and social values can alter the balance of power among the actors.

Another challenge of design interventions is how to scale up the actors' emergent ideas so as to realize the counter-narratives. Alongside sites and actors of citizenship, the scale of acts of citizenship to which Isin refers needs further investigation. Suggestions for further research include an investigation of the extent to which citizens are empowered by participating in design interventions, as well as an inquiry about whether the interventions have value in deepening democracy in postapartheid South Africa. For these purposes, longitudinal studies are necessary. Nonetheless, this article offers a starting point to answer Fuad-Luke's question of "what could be" if citizens in South Africa move from being politically enraged and merely protesting to being politically proactive in addressing their immediate sociopolitical condition. Based on these primary findings, future directions of the relationship between design activism and citizenship in South Africa are worth investigating.

56 Harold G. Nelson and Erik Stolterman, *The Design Way: Intentional Change in an Unpredictable World: Foundations and Fundamentals of Design Competence*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).