

Social design cases

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Social design as a part of graphic design is not only a matter of concepts; it is fundamentally awareness on what is designed and what is done.

This article brings examples to what is described in the article «[Social design: definitions.](#)»

In figure 1, we can see a clear example of social design: no product or service is for sale. It coincides with institutional and commercial design in that, beyond pretensions, design can impact receivers for the mere fact of outstanding and for its aesthetic resolution. But that doesn't define it as a commercial or institutional design; at best, it speaks of its belonging to a same branch of design: graphic design.

The message is clear: it indicates that the zapatist struggle has borne fruit and that's reason for celebration. The sender is the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, in English: Zapatist National Liberation Army), located «down to the left», including a love note in the message that would define them as non-violent, unlike how the governing ideology pretends to label them. There is more; the message is supported by the zapatist people, sheltered by the sky and the earth, symbolized in the sun and the moon.



Figure 1. The text says: «Another Mexico is born down to the left».

To whom is the message addressed? Evidently, to the zapatists themselves and to those who identify with them. The message is: «we've accomplished something in our fight and we're happy». Certainly, this can be interpreted as an incentive to continue the fight or a happy expression surrounding a holiday or anniversary. Zapatists do not require of the advertising apparatus more connected to the capitalist speech, that must continuously stimulate people. Zapatists have enough motivation for their struggle, which occur naturally instead of occurring due to propagandistic initiatives. It's not like they don't need propaganda, since the poster actually is propaganda. What happens here is that propaganda lingers behind, while the poster is a mere festive expression, parting of what they do: an instance that brings the ELZN closer to its social base, clearly stating who they are, what they've achieved and with who they've archived it.



Figure 2. Text says: «Justice to the gas station workers. Let's support the strike of the workers of Belem Gas Station! - 1. Reinstatement of fired ones. 2. Legal solution to the strike. 3. Collective hiring throughout gas stations in the country. 4. For fair, legal contracts for gas-stationers in the country.»

The poster sends its message from a certain perspective of dealing with children, but this is just the watermark of the sender's ideology and in no way it appears as a setpoint to fulfill. We know this because it simply presents what it regards as features that distinguish children, taking for granted and considering implicit the dealing with them.

The poster does not sell a way to treat children, which remains in a secondary layer. The main thing

is the proposal of contact points between children and others. This makes it social design and not institutional design. Here appears an important feature of social design: the subordination of institutional and commercial to the contact points between the communicants.

However, it would be precise to remember that such subordination constitutes a very thin line between institutional-commercial design and social design. Only context provides enough hints about the kind of design we're dealing with.

Figure 4 provides a clear example of commercial design, which promotes Pelayo products. It is observable that nowhere in the poster no one sells anything in such announcement, nor there is a setpoint or excitatory of any kind. The ad appears as an innocent announce of the products' new packaging. Nonetheless, only a naive look wouldn't identify this ad as a commercial design.



Figure 4. Text says: «The wholesaler sweetmeal, from now in Dipac.»

This example is typical of informative posters and calls for activities or school, neighborhood and community meetings. They can be more or less elaborate, more or less aesthetic, but their primal goal, to which all other goals are subject, is to spread information generated in gatherings or public agreements. It is true that, somehow, this is also done by commercial and institutional design, but those ad's target audiences are apart from what is divulged (like mentioned earlier, these are only connected in an infatuation).

It is also true that every communication implies certain infatuation, but in social design dreams are shared, whereas for other designs they are by setpoint and only shared indirectly as part of the social imagery to which they belong. The former are dreams belonging to a movement or community, the latter are product of eagerness for power or of capitalist benefits.

In order to do social design it's not necessary to be involved in a popular movement or struggle.

Social design can be made from any trench, as long as the goal is to bring people together or to become an organic part of sympathized events and movements. It is not enough to give social meaning to a design for it to be social; that's closer to a setpoint than to people. It is necessary that design responds to the organic logic of events that encourage social movements, stepping away from the messianism they can contain.

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