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The discourse of design for social innovation

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Abstract

Social innovation is an interdisciplinary area, where many professionals work collaboratively towards public good. In the last decade, design practitioners in the UK have shown increasing interest in social innovation projects and much of the existing literature on *design for social innovation* (DfSI) is influenced by studies that draw from these practices. Theory to support practice-based studies is yet to be fully developed.

The research informing this paper regards DfSI as a *discourse*; the flow of knowledge, which determines individual and collective doing and formative action that shapes society, thus exercising power (Jäger and Maier 2016). It focuses on the political agency of design in supporting social innovation process and is informed by concepts from Foucault (e.g. power, discourse).

We present a methodology based on dispositive analysis (a particular approach within critical discourse studies) to aid the examination of DfSI's political nature. This methodology builds on Jäger and Maier's (2016:113) three-part model of "dispositive", and is useful to reveal any assumptions, contradictions, and limitations of what can be said and done within the DfSI discourse. The resulting awareness from this process enriches the design methodologies, and can support theoretical developments to underpin the practice.

The paper explains how the dispositive model can be employed in the design field, and offers emerging insights from a select set of texts, as an example of the discursive approach. These texts are a heterogeneous selection from design literature that traces the influences of different local and temporal discursive contexts on the global DfSI discourse.

Keywords: design for social innovation, discourse, dispositive, Foucault

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to promote a discursive approach for examining design practices for social innovation. Such an examination, we believe, can reveal how *design for social innovation* (DfSI) is socially and politically constructed, and how it can be used to expand or restrict the social and political capacities of the society. It supports the efforts to build an "epistemology sensitive to the inevitable dialectics of struggle between forces pursuing radical social innovation oriented to social emancipation and those seeking to maintain an asymmetrically organized social order biased towards agencies of profit-making, efficient markets, and business-friendly social relations" (Jessop *et al*.

2013: 112). The kind of examination we promote is likely to provoke more questions than answers; yet, we consider this as a necessary step to inform the DfSI practice.

In this section, we provide a discussion around social innovation, design, and the political context. We then present the DfSI scene in the UK and its political nature. The third section introduces the discourse theory, and then moves on to explaining the particular approach we adopted for this research. Later we share some emerging insights from a preliminary analysis, and conclude with reflections on the research limitations.

Social innovation

Social innovation is a controversial term. Montgomery (2016: 1981) first draws our attention to its interchangeable usage with other terms such as social economy, social enterprise, social intervention, third sector, etc., and calls this situation as a "definitional bankruptcy". He also argues that it is "at the centre of an ideological battle between neoliberalism and its opponents". The traces of this battle are reflected on each attempt of defining the social innovation concept, revealing that it "is never neutral but always political and socially constructed'' (Nicholls and Murdock 2012: 4). As an example, Murray, Caulier-Grice, and Mulgan (2010: 3) describe social innovation as "new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations" and as "innovations that are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act". Although it seems very comprehensive at first glance, this description leads to further questions, such as:

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- What are *social needs*?

- *Why* are new social relationships and collaborations desired?

- Between which social actors are these *new* relationships intended?

- What is *good* for society?

- Why is society's *capacity to act* important?

Depending on personal interpretations and positions, everyone would answer these questions *slightly differently*, leading to *slightly different* outcomes after each attempt to innovate socially.

Design for Social Innovation

Following more technology-based predecessors (the industrial revolution; steam and railways; steel, electricity, and heavy engineering; oil, automobiles, and mass production; and information and telecommunications), social innovation forms the sixth and latest wave of macro-innovation (Nicholls and Murdock 2012: 1-2). The design profession has always aligned itself to these waves and responded to the evolving human needs (*ibid*.). Today, design actively contributes to the social innovation field as a creative discipline.

Some design practices for social innovation are motivated by social problems or needs, and seek solutions through the design process. Others may not have a problem to begin with; in those cases, they simply aim for improving the existing situations (Manzini 2015). For the purposes of this research, we use *DfSI* as an umbrella term to cover the amorphous collection of these various practices.

There is a trend amongst designers to *do good for society*, in line with the significant societal happenings such as the financial crisis, the increasing awareness on the conditions and the outcomes of overconsumption, and global

climate change (Tromp *et al.* 2011). Wright (2012) gives a sociological explanation for this trend, and asserts that a growing part of society pursues an alternative for the current system – in spite of the message "There is no alternative" Thatcherian era persuaded the society to believe. Wright (*ibid.*:2) calls this pursuit as *emancipatory*, and offers a framework for the emancipatory actions, based on these two propositions:

> *Many forms of human suffering and many deficits in human flourishing are the results of existing institutions and social structures.*
>
> *Transforming existing institutions and structures in the right way has the potential to substantially reduce human suffering and expand the possibilities for human flourishing.*

Wright deems a transformation at a systems-level for emancipation necessary, rather than incremental changes that only lead to doing *less bad*. In other words, emancipation is "*the project of designing different kinds of society*" (Tonkinwise 2016a). And if designers are truly concerned about societal challenges, they need to understand the ideologies framing the very system they are operating within to be able to create any substantive change (*ibid.*).

The political context in the UK

As noted above, the design profession responds to the changes in societal needs, and creates changes in society accordingly. Therefore, understanding the societal context is an important step to examine the DfSI practices in the UK. Cook's (2011) research, for instance, reviews the connection between New Labour's social agendas and the rise of collaborative design practices in 2000s. New Labour's *Third Way* rhetoric employed design as a tool to implement their user-

centred public service reforms (Sangiorgi 2015). Terms like *empowerment of* and *engagement with* local communities became popular, paving the way for design agencies solely focused on service design (some of which are exemplified in the following section), which combined user-centred and collaborative design methodologies with an evidence-based approach. Ferragina and Arrigoni (2016) provide a more detailed account of the changes in political discourse between 1980s and 2000s under both Labour and Conservative Party leadership in the UK through a comparative study of their manifestos, and point out that both parties assumed a role supporting neoliberal ideals through the *Third Way* and *Big Society* rhetoric, respectively. Adopting the jargon developed around *social capital* discourse, the rhetoric concealed the contradiction between the encouragement of civic engagement and the neoliberal political agenda (*ibid*.). By *neoliberal* agenda we refer to a political, economic and cultural paradigm, which alter affairs between the state and the market in favour of the latter (Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005).

DfSI in the UK

This examination of how DfSI is socially and politically constructed begins with a look at the social/service design agencies in the UK, many of which were founded in 2000s (such as SNOOK, FutureGov, Live│Work, USCreates, ThinkPublic). Several of these agencies report on their practices on a project-by-project basis through their websites, blogs, and project reports. In some cases, where work is done collaboratively through an institution, the collaborators report on their scoping processes, approaches, activities, outputs, and impacts in grey papers or

more formally in peer-reviewed academic journals – thus contributing to a sharing of practice and the potential for reflective analysis.

Several UK DfSI companies began in response to the societal challenges in the early 2000's and saw the opportunity to apply design methods for engaging the public and addressing these challenges (Emilson 2014). These initiatives occurred in parallel with support from the UK Design Council, which encouraged the exploration of using design in new and social contexts as a way to "improve peoples' lives" (Design Council 2016).

The UK Design Council provided the means - through funding, project scoping and advisory input - for design practitioners to embark on research and demonstration projects. One of the earliest examples was their RED research unit. This unit consisted of designers, policy analysts and social scientists, who worked collaboratively to address social and economic issues (Burns *et al*. 2006). They framed their approach as "transformation design" based on the breadth and nature of the stakeholders engaged. In 2007, the RED unit became a formal social enterprise, called *Participle*, and later led to the foundation of the design agency, *InWithFor*. This pattern conveys a further aspect of the practice-driven nature of DfSI, as there are numerous examples, where the government-related advisory councils identify societal challenges - sometimes referred to as *demonstration programmes* such as "Designs of the Time" (Design Council 2007) - that are initially scoped as multi-disciplinary design projects and later evolve into social enterprises and design agencies. This approach is likewise seen where regional councils and national institutions enlist the support of design agencies; examples include Kent County Council collaborating with Engine to design a new

platform for co-creation, Live│Work working with Sunderland City Council to support hard-to-reach unemployed people, and SNOOK joining forces with the UK Cabinet Office to make social investment more people-centred (Parnell 2016).

As a Scottish-based social innovation initiative, SNOOK works to improve regional- and national-level public services through design. In their efforts to improve neighbourhoods, and to co-create public policy, they work with a range of stakeholders, and focus on issues such as democracy, politics, and power; as exemplified by their recent workshop "Products for Democracy Hack" (Georgieva 2015). Like their counterparts in the rest of the UK, while their interest and activities in DfSI are evident, what is perhaps less evident is what informs their practice and their understanding of the various situations in which they act. Sociologist Sarah Schulman (2012, n. d.) reflects on her experience in the design agency InWithFor:

> *It's not that I don't believe in 'social design' methods – in starting with people, making ideas real, and iterating those ideas over time – but I believe in them insofar as they shake up the status quo, narrow inequalities, and set new social standards. The danger comes when these new design methods make social services more palatable, more attractive, and thus more difficult to challenge.*

What Sarah and an increasing number of other DfSI practitioners have come to realise is that they have a significant impact (ergo responsibility) on what the future of the society will look like. Therefore, it is utmost important to "understand the state of affairs as a prelude to changing it" (Brookfield 2015).

Political agency of design

Reflecting on his teaching experience in a service design course, Agid (2012) points out the political aspect of DfSI. *The social* is not a politically uniform structure with consensually defined needs and desires. Individuals forming a society rarely agree on what is *good* for the society (Fry 1992). The ability to detect and challenge existing assumptions is the first step towards social innovation. Drawing from the difficulties his students experienced during their service design project for former prisoners, Agid (2012: 45) acknowledges the need for this ability:

> *How, for instance, can the students in my class design ideas that don't take the prison as a starting place when many enter the class presuming, without knowing it, that prisons are one clear and permanent piece of their design world, and that the reasons for their existence are unchallenged?*

The term *political* represents the "ontological dimension of antagonism" (Mouffe 2013). Although the common definition of *political* suggests a relation to "the government or public affairs of a country" (Oxford Dictionaries n.d.), Mouffe (2013) rather separates the *political* from the *politics* – "the ensemble of practices and institutions whose aim is to organise human coexistence".

Building on Mouffe's definition, DiSalvo (2010) and Keshavarz and Mazé (2013) make a distinction between design for politics (improving structures and mechanisms that enable governing) and political design (revealing and confronting power relations and identifying new terms and themes for contestation and new trajectories for action). Fry (2003) approaches the political from a different perspective, and argues "*the politics of design* is how design is

employed, by whom, to what ends, while *design and the political*" speaks to "the agency of how design acts as (one of) the directional forces that shape human conduct and its material consequences." In a more recent publication, Fry (2011) develops this argument further and asserts design itself as politics due to its *world-making/future-making* aspect. This argument is also central to DiSalvo's (2012) case for the agonistic capabilities of *adversarial design*; design in all its forms is always already political: that rather than merely passively, neutrally conveying messages, it actively intervenes to stimulate and produce new meanings. DiSalvo (2012:16) states:

> *Design attempts to produce new conditions or the tools by which to understand and act on current conditions. In the process of doing so, designers and the artifacts and systems they produce assert claims and judgements about society and strive to shape beliefs and courses of action. Claiming and asserting that things should be other than they are and attempting to produce the means to achieve that change are not neutral activities.*

Uncovering the political paradigm within DfSI therefore becomes essential. Such examination can help question the power relations between the design practitioners, the funding bodies or commissioners, and the targeted social units, such as minorities, communities, or societies. It can highlight the issues of legitimacy, and clarify the political language used in DfSI projects. The next section presents critical discourse theory as the means to achieve this objective.

Critical discourse theory

Discourse theory originates from linguistics. Since Zellig Harris first published about discourse analysis in 1952, there have been major developments related to the forms and extents of this method, not just in linguistics, but also in other fields such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, media and culture studies, and political science. For the purpose of our research, we benefit from the heterogeneous and interdisciplinary nature of the discourse theory, as it is suitable to address the eclectic social innovation field situated between disciplines. We argue that, although only a handful of design researchers have shown interest in a discursive approach so far (Kelly 2015, Krippendorff 2006), design professionals as well as researchers may adopt our framework to add another layer of critique, reflection and depth to their practice.

Presenting the entirety of the discourse studies is well beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, we should focus on the particular approach, namely critical discourse analysis, which we follow in our research. Critical discourse analysis differs from other types of discourse studies due to its problem-oriented nature and its interest in social inequality. It aims to deconstruct the structures of power, ideology, dominance, discrimination, and legitimisation hidden in discourses, and also attempts to make the researcher's own position and interests explicit through a reflective process (Wodak and Meyer 2016).

Critical discourse analysts have developed different methodologies over the years. Examples include *discourse-historical* approach by Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, *dialectical relational* approach by Norman Fairclough, and sociocognitive approach by Teun van Dijk. In this paper, we present *dispositive*

analysis by Siegfried Jäger and Florentine Maier, which is heavily influenced by Foucauldian theory. Therefore, we first examine what *discourse* means from a Foucauldian point of view. Foucault (1982:49) notes that:

> *Discourses are composed of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations); but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is more that renders them irreducible to the language and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe.*

Discourses determine how individual and collective thoughts about the world are formulated and acted upon (Rose 2012, Willig 2013), which in turn shapes society, thus exercising power (Jäger and Maier 2016). Foucault argues that, if unquestioned, discourses creep into our consciousness as absolute, objective truths, and become norms for the society, when in fact they are mere interpretations of the *world*. In line with the social constructivist ontology, Foucauldian discourse theory proposes that there can be various versions of the world depending on personal constructs and discourses, and some of these are accepted as *more legitimate* due to the support they receive from *institutions of power*. The reign of a discourse does not last forever though; discourses are exposed to constant flux. They simultaneously reinforce or erode each other (Wodak and Meyer 2016).

It is also necessary to understand the meaning of *power* in this context. Foucault (1996: 394) describes power as "a whole series of particular mechanisms, definable and defined, that seem capable of inducing behaviours or discourses". Power is the capacity to act in favour of an individual or an institution, even though this act puts others in disadvantage and receives resistance. For Foucault,

power is productive; through discourse it produces our truths, norms, rights, even our identities. Discourses transmit and reinforce power, as much as they undermine and expose it (Foucault 1978a).

Our working definition for discourse is "the interaction between human expressions and knowledge". Human expressions can be in the form of language (written or spoken), signs, practices (or actions), and objects. Therefore, discourses can be examined through all these forms of expression (although the majority of discourse studies focus on texts). In this sense, dispositive analysis provides a unique opportunity for design studies, as it enables the examination of practices and objects along with textual sources. The next section explains this approach in more detail.

Methodology

According to Foucault (1978b), dispositives are comprised of textual and non-textual elements (i.e. language vs. object). Jäger and Maier (2016:113) develop Foucault's conception further into a three-part model:

> A constantly evolving synthesis of knowledge between *linguistically performed practices* (i.e. thinking, speaking, writing based upon a shared knowledge pool), *non-linguistically performed practices* (i.e. doing things based upon knowledge) and *materialisations* (manifestations of knowledge, i.e. natural and produced things).

We would like to clarify this model through the example of an ancient artefact, found during an archaeological excavation. This artefact can be examined as part of two different dispositives. As an ordinary object, it could provide clues about

the culture, daily life, and practices from thousands of years ago. The artefact

belongs to a specific cultural context, and acts as a record of material and

symbolic values. The usage of this artefact –no matter how simple it is– requires

a considerable amount of knowledge. Even when we lack any linguistic sources

from that era, the artefact can speak for the people, who used it, and tell their

stories to some extent. If considered as an archaeological find, on the other hand,

the artefact's meaning and value change completely. Now it is part of the

archaeological dispositive. Professional training of an archaeologist can be

viewed as linguistically performed practice in this case, and it interacts with the

non-linguistically performed practice (an excavation, for instance) and the

materialisation (the archaeological find). Now, our artefact becomes an object of

scientific value. Its examination informs back both the linguistically- and non-

linguistically performed archaeological practices.

Application of dispositive analysis in design field

We consider dispositive analysis particularly suitable for design field, as it

enables us to incorporate the material characteristics of design into a theoretical

examination in a critical way. Here we explain how we apply this approach in

DfSI context.

At first, we have selected seminal texts from design literature as examples of

linguistically performed practices. Origins of DfSI discourse are explored through

the works of prominent authors from five countries. The historical, political and

cultural contexts, where these texts were situated, play a significant role in the

development of the discourse in question. The texts cover a period between early

1970's and today, and are selected according to their influence on the discourse. The selected texts are:

- Victor Papanek, 1985 (1971). USA. *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*, 2nd ed.

- Pelle Ehn, 1988. Sweden. *Work-oriented design of computer artifacts*.

- Nigel Whiteley, 1993. UK. *Design For Society*.

- Tony Fry, 2011. Australia. *Design as Politics*.

- Ezio Manzini, 2015. Italy. *Design, When Everybody Designs*.

Secondly, we have collected accounts of DfSI practitioners on their *non-linguistically performed practices*. The echoes of the DfSI discourse are reviewed through the interviews with the practitioners, who consume and interpret the existing discourse, and contribute back to its continuous development. Fifteen interviewees have been chosen for the research according to their location (UK-based), prior experience in DfSI projects, and career directions (with an emphasis on *social* motivation).

For the last part of the analysis, we have gathered visual, textual, and material outputs from DfSI projects, for example posters, leaflets, newspaper articles, websites, exhibitions, products, service blueprints, project reports, and video recordings. This multimodal analysis looks at the visual language of DfSI projects, and how design practitioners communicate the discourse with the wider society.

We should emphasise that the construction of the corpus in our research stands only as one way of how dispositive analysis can be applied. A book may serve as an example of a linguistically performed practice, if the focus of the analysis lies on

the knowledge within, but the same book may be analysed for its visual and

material properties in another research project.

Tracing the Origins of DfSI

Design history is not short of examples of the designerly involvements in societal

challenges. In 1963, for instance, UNESCO commissioned International Council of

Industrial Designers (ICSID) to consult on a number of projects for improving the

human condition (Smithsonian Institute 2013). In 1976, the *Design for Need*

symposium was held at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London to discuss early

industrial design ideals, which combined social purpose with aesthetic

expression and symbolic value. Between 1979 and 1981, Patricia Moore, carried

out a research project on design, aging, and poverty, by travelling to 116 cities in

North America disguised as an elderly woman. In 1981,

Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) was formed to

raise awareness towards critical, social, and environmental issues, and to

develop responsive design and planning. In 1993, the *Doors of Perception*

international conference was initiated by John Thackara to inspire social

innovators for alternative sustainable futures and practical design responses.

Yet, as Margolin and Margolin (2002:24) argue, these and many other initiatives

did not lead to an established "social model" for design. Instead, the "market

model" remained dominant, and there has been a lack of research that might

"demonstrate what a designer can contribute to human welfare" (*ibid*., 28).

Here, we provide some emerging insights from the analysis of the three texts

selected. We present some of the underlying reasons why DfSI has been still

operating within "the market model". Examining these reasons may enable designers to develop the long sought-after "social model" for future practice.

Design for the Real World by Victor Papanek

First published 45 years ago, *Design for the World* was a bold book from a bold designer. Papanek used a polemical and moral rhetoric to make a point. By all accounts, he succeeded. His style and ideas were ridiculed by a number of critiques at the time when the book was first published; nevertheless, for some that did not spoil his strong message. Even today, many designers speak of this book as a major source of inspiration.

Papanek was the pioneer for environmentally conscious design ideals, but here we focus on the social aspects of his work. In the preface to the second edition of *Design for the Real World*, he admits his naïvety about the *Third World* countries:

> *While we fought against colonialism and exploitation, I and others failed to appreciate how much we could learn in the places we had set out to teach. (Papanek 1985: xvii)*

He evaluates the unsuccessful outcomes of European interventions in Africa, and claims that designers cannot create a meaningful change, unless they spend a considerable amount of time within the communities or environments in their target and develop an understanding of that particular context. For Papanek, the optimum way for a designer to operate is to become a seed of change by completely immersing into the context, and to ensure a continuous, sustainable self-sufficiency.

Despite the gloomy environmental predictions, he envisions a way for designers to serve the humanity, rather than "to stop working entirely": through aiding

young people to participate in changing society. (*ibid*.: xiii). However, his seemingly radical ideas lose their power when he almost apologetically articulates that:

> *Many design professionals found it difficult to accept my proposal that design for areas previously neglected was one more direction for design. Instead they felt that I proposed substituting concern for the vast human needs in the world for all commercial design, as now practiced. Nothing could be further from the truth: all I suggest is that we add some intelligently designed goods to a global marketplace now flooded with manufactured "bads".* (*ibid*.: 69)

Papanek is aware of the financial constraints designers face within the market model. For his students facing the dilemma between profit and social responsibility, he suggests donating a small part of their time or income towards solving problems that are not addressed by profit-driven design practices. And with that, he establishes a route of *incremental steps towards sustainability* that we are still following today, still far from the final destination.

Work-Oriented Design of Computer Artifacts by Pelle Ehn

Ehn is one of the prominent names in the Scandinavian participatory design tradition, which originates from the social and political movements of the 1960s and the 1970s, when people "demanded an increased say in the decisions that affected many different aspects of their lives" (Robertson and Simonsen 2012: 3). In this tradition, designers value working and designing with the people concerned, and start the design process from their experiences and needs (Emilson 2014).

Ehn's work discussed here is his doctoral dissertation, and genre-wise this makes it different than the other four texts selected. We settled for this text, because it elucidates the origins of participatory design as Ehn theorised. Even though his practice, which provides the foundations of his research, focuses on the design artefacts in work environment, it has a profound interest in emancipation. Ehn elaborates:

> *This interest focuses on knowledge and understanding for emancipation from hypostatized forces of history and society and is directed towards creating conditions for independent individuals in a society of free cooperation and communication.* (Ehn 1988: 247)

He points out the importance of understanding the social, cultural, and historical conditions for design practices, to avoid becoming an instrument for manipulation of social organisations despite a humanistic spirit (*ibid*.).

Ehn promotes participatory design within a social democracy context. Therefore, there is nothing wrong when he says:

> *… the political reason for involving end users in the design process, and for emphasizing their qualifications and participation as resources for democratic control and changes, is only one side of the coin. The other is the role of skill and participation in design as a creative and communicative process.* (*ibid*.: 6)

It becomes problematic, though, when this approach is applied in a neoliberal context. Participatory design places the social, creative, and communicative value on display, which shines as an untapped resource for the state to harness (Dowling and Harvie 2014).

Design, When Everybody Designs by Ezio Manzini

Manzini is an advocate of design collaborations with local communities. He has a liberal approach, and considers that small-scale projects are the sure way towards sustainability.

The language of the book reveals a position compatible with the *Big Society* rhetoric. *Capacity building, co-design, collaboration, creative citizens and communities*, and *locality* are some of the themes that often appear in the book. Also, the definitions of expert design, done by people with professional design training; and diffuse design, of those using their natural designing capacity, fit well to the neoliberal agenda to capitalise every aspect of social life. Manzini mentions the risk "that social innovation could become the acceptable face of a program of cuts in public social budgets" (Manzini 2015: 15), but he chooses not articulate the political side of DfSI (Tonkinwise 2016b). He admits the absence of a thorough discussion on "the powerful forces that are fighting against the emergence of a new, sustainable world" (Manzini 2015: 26-26); yet he believes that his account on the current state of things would somehow "trigger, support, and orient possible design actions".

Conclusions

This paper is a based on an on-going PhD research. Here, we presented a critical discourse approach to examine DfSI scene in the UK. However, we believe this approach is highly relevant for other discussions in design field. Only a couple of months ago, a group of young design researchers started the blog *Decolonising Design* to draw the attention of the global design community to "questions of

power that have shaped its own practice" (Abdulla *et al.* 2016). They demanded a debate around the *colonial* ethos of design, and highlighted the detrimental effects of the discourse of "centre vs. periphery", or "rich North vs. poor South" in every aspect of life, including academia. We believe a stronger connection between critical discourse studies and design research may provide the ontological and methodological means to move the conversation in this *decolonialist* direction.

If we go back to the focus of our paper, DfSI is more than practicing design in a social context. Understanding *social good*, and evaluating the *state of affairs* are both relevant and imperative actions for design practitioners before they embark on projects, which may influence the society in unforeseen ways. We do not offer any answers or solutions at this point. Rather, we encourage you to ask more questions and to create a process for resistance. A critical and reflective practice is needed to ensure that it does not support a hidden agenda of exploitation. To support this process, we suggested adopting a Foucauldian approach and a methodology from critical discourse studies. Dispositive analysis, a fairly new methodology developed in the last ten years mainly amongst the German-speaking research community, presents opportunities for design research in terms of novelty and criticality.

We would like to conclude by highlighting one limitation of the discursive approach. Foucault acknowledges that his position is not outside the ideas and practices he is analysing. "He is not claiming to speak from a position of 'truth' – he is aware of the fact that he himself as a subject can only speak within the limits imposed upon him by the discursive frameworks circulating at the time"

(Mills 1997: 33). In this sense, critical discourse analysis does not help us

produce *truths*, but rather enables us to discover and push the limits of our

knowledge.

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