



## What Got Us Here, Won't Get Us There

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# History of social design as social history of design: An introduction to the Brazilian perspective

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**Abstract:** This paper prompts an introductory panorama regarding the historical paths and the pedagogical vectors of social design in Brazil, through the analysis of a set of documents: two master's theses, a book and a round table on the theme. In conjunction with a narrative review of the evidences, the theoretical foundation summarizes the design history contemporary research agenda with emphasis on its social matter. Therefore, the study envisages history of social design as an emerging topic of inquiry and its addition towards the histories of design education in the Brazilian scenario.

**Keywords:** design history, social design, microhistory, history of design education, history of design research

## 1. Historical preambles to what got us here

In Brazil, according to art and design historian Cardoso (2008 [2000]), the context of decline of the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985) and the recognition of the limitations of modernism made room for a conception of social design. Posterior to the incursions of Victor Papanek<sup>1</sup> into South America, marked by a series of lectures and workshops held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro - PUC-Rio in May 1980, design pedagogy would turn into a reinvigorated approach, based on the insertion of students in real contexts with social demands. In this sense, professors Ana Maria Branco<sup>2</sup> and José Luiz Mendes Ripper<sup>3</sup> were looking for a new way of teaching Design and

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<sup>1</sup> The Austro-American designer, architect, professor, theorist, activist and immigrant Victor J. Papanek (1923-1998) became known for defending socially and ecologically responsible design and the scathing criticism of unbridled consumerism, ecological spoliation and professional elitism. His seminal book 'Design for the Real World' (1971) expressed the assumptions of the social design movement.

<sup>2</sup> With a degree in Visual Communication (1975) and Industrial Design (1976) from PUC-Rio, Branco worked as a professor at the university between 1981 and 2015.

<sup>3</sup> With a degree in Architecture from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ (1958), Ripper worked as a professor at PUC-Rio from 1973 and received the title of professor emeritus in 2016.

were motivated by Papanek's ideas (Anastassakis, 2011; Araújo, 2017; Couto, 1991; 1993; 2017; Del Gaudio, 2014; Montuori, 2017; Pacheco, 1996a; 1996b; Ribeiro, 2002).

This paper seeks to offer an introduction to the histories of social design in Brazil, through the analysis of a set of documents comprehended as significant for a doctoral research on this topic. Considering four decades of repercussion of social design within institutionalised education in the country, the evidences under a narrative review were selected by their historical and pedagogical relevance, besides being representative of different contexts in terms of time and region, as well as a variance in terms of source and format. Firstly, a communal relation is established between two master's theses. The research developed by Rita Couto (1991; 1993) in the context of graduate school of Education at PUC-Rio, reckoned social design as an innovative teaching-learning methodology in the subject of *Projeto Básico* [Basic Project] at the institution's undergraduate Design course. Then, the investigation conducted by Heliana Pacheco (1996a; 1996b), the first master's thesis approved in a graduate Design course in Brazil, in the pioneering program of the Department of Arts & Design at PUC-Rio, explored an alternative classroom experience in the realm of social design education at the university campus, called *A Barraca* [The Tent].

Secondly, *Projetando Produtos Sociais* [Designing Social Products] is a book written by Danilo Émmerson Nascimento Silva (2009a; 2009b), a professor at the undergraduate Design course at the Federal University of Pernambuco - UFPE, in the northeastern capital of Recife-PE. It was published by *Editora da UFPE* [UFPE Press] and is currently out of print. Thirdly, the round table entitled *Design Social* [Social Design] was part of the School of Design at the Federal Institute Sul-rio-grandense - IFSul (2021) 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary program and transmitted online during the Covid-19 pandemic. IFSul is a public educational institution that holds the undergraduate Design course and the Graphic Design and Interior Design technical courses, in the southern city of Pelotas-RS. In order to set the theoretical frame, a brief overview on the design history contemporary research agenda with emphasis on its social matter is presented, along with a synthesis on history of social design as an emerging topic of inquiry.

## 2. Historiographical foundations to get us there

In a historiographical genealogy about the process of constitution of design history research in Brazil, Braga (2020) points out that the consolidation of the discipline occurred from the establishment of graduate studies, scientific journals and academic conferences in design in the 1990s. In this phase, historical research attempted to expand its scope beyond institutionalisation and industrialisation, and after an effort to publish specialised works in the early 2000s, it encompassed the history of packaging and graphic memory. In the following decade, the focus of design history in Brazil was regionalism, with events and publications that discussed the field in states other than the Rio-São Paulo axis, as well as the affirmation of historical scholarship from the perspective of gender and female protagonism.

Regarding the preponderance of investigations that privilege the professional practice of designers and languages and formal elements that represent a certain material and visual culture, Braga (2020) stresses, in spite of acknowledging their relevant contribution: "there are few studies focusing on the relationship between design and the socioeconomic conditions of production or studies that try to understand how design results from the economic and social demands of the society in which it is inserted" (p. 331). This would be a crucial point for a conception of social history of design — to put it in more general terms, when the domain of design history meets the historiographical dimension of social history. In this aspect, Barros (2005) and Burke (1992) explain the vocation of social history for synthesis of facts in relation to broader social, political and cultural nexuses, whereas Teasley

(2019) adds its richness in terms of variance in individual experiences of shared conditions, as opposed to macro-narratives of change from political or economic history taken as accepted facts, which is also the case in some histories of design.

Spearheading the effort to strengthen the historiography of design, Braga (2020), Fallan (2010; 2019a; 2019b), Midal (2019) and Teasley (2019) highlight interdisciplinary with the humanities and social sciences, especially in order to consider the theoretical-methodological concepts of the field of history. Followed by expressing the idea of design under analysis, the entanglements of the subject matter in design history with other historiographical strands, such as history of ideas, history of technology, work history or regional history etc., would arouse interest of the broader academic community and place design in a history of society. Concerning the pedagogical role of history, Fallan (2010; 2019a; 2019b) indicates the educative potential of the discipline of design history with greater social relevance and influence, based on a tripod formed by: a) the concepts of the field of history at stake, in general; b) approaches and objectives in discursive interventions, as opposed to reformist moralism; and c) the object of study, of wide academic and public interest, as investigation in the focus of design history tackles on contemporary challenges and issues of great social significance.

When introducing methods and themes in the current research agenda, Lees-Maffei (2010) mentions that “an early concern for ‘good design’ has become less compelling during a period in which design history seeks to challenge ideas about discrimination and pursue an inclusive definition of design within social context” (p. 264). In similar fashion, in an update of the panorama of historical research from the initial terms of the designer, the object, technology and manufacturing, Whitehouse (2017) underlines that “it comprises a complex and changing dynamic that on the grand scale pertains to economic, social and cultural production and consumption, and on the micro level to the collaborative practices of designers and ordinary people in the construction of everyday meaning” (p. 14). Overall, these principles are in agreement with what is pointed out by Midal (2019), in regard to the affirmation of design history as an autonomous discipline on its own right, pivoted around its social matter and an increase on scholarship on alternative approaches as object of study. Thus, the following questions are central to this investigation: what is the place of social design in design history? Which historiographical theories and methods are implied on research in this realm?

In the scope of the conditions of academic research, the ‘Social Design Futures’ report briefly introduces this approach in the domain of design history<sup>4</sup>. Among the opportunities that arise, it is worth noting: 1) the position of research in social design in relation to design studies and the social sciences; 2) the historical formation of social design, current policies and other contexts and future possibilities. Armstrong et al. (2014) state that “what is known about this history has tended to be folded into accounts of design history in which its pioneers are understood within mainstream accounts. However, social design invariably involves non-expert practitioners, close alliances with non-design fields, entanglements with policy bureaucracies or, conversely, below-the-radar, grassroots action” (p. 18). The report concludes that social design has deep historical roots and there is much to be acknowledged yet.

In this sense, Clarke (2019 [2015]; 2021a; 2021b) has contested the genealogy of social design, previously attributed to the production of political posters within the US counterculture, and has relocated the beginnings of the social design movement within the intersection between the field of design and the human and social sciences — mainly anthropology — vis-à-vis the *émigré* cultures and the theoretical-critical contribution of Victor Papanek. To a certain extent, it meant the reorientation

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<sup>4</sup> The report was commissioned by the Arts and Humanities Research Council - AHRC in relation to social design as a topic of inquiry in Higher Education Institutions - HEI in the United Kingdom, and highlights that we are witnessing a ‘social design moment’, not only in that country, but globally, in face of multiple complex challenges that this approach has the potential to encompass (Armstrong et al., 2014).

of design education and practice under the industrial rationalist paradigm towards critical intervention with a renewed social agenda, in the domain of intermediate technology with key-agents such as the elderly, low-income population, people with disabilities and people in rural areas, which consisted of a significant portion of the design culture from the late 1960s to the closure of the 1970s.

The concepts and actions around social design were updated in the dawning of the millennium with the influential article on the ‘social model’, written by design historian and theorist Victor Margolin in co-authorship with his wife, social worker and teacher Sylvia (2002), which proposed an approach based on participatory observation and interdisciplinary work with professionals of fields such as health and education, along with the study of social needs. A decade later, by recovering the utopian thinking of William Morris<sup>5</sup> (2020 [1890]), Walter Gropius<sup>6</sup> and Buckminster Fuller<sup>7</sup>, Margolin (2015) expanded the perspectives beyond intervention towards the articulation of local, national and international networks of schools and design organisations for the joint planning of actions in favour of radically new ways of life through established and emerging practices of design<sup>8</sup>.

It is worth noting the genealogies of social design in face of social inequalities and environmental emergencies of our time in relation to the educative potential of design history. In this scope, scholars include charting the Arts & Crafts movement led by Morris (2020 [1890]) and the utopian vision on human labour, culture and nature, along with the social design movement led by Papanek (1971) and the questioning of the integration of professional activity with capitalism, industrial production and consumer society — which revitalised studies beyond nostalgia around heroic figures would inform a new ‘design culture of the discontent’ (Fallan, 2010; 2019a; 2019b; Midal, 2019).

Concisely, this research on history of social design envisages an effort in the realm of social history of design, without playing on words and in a discursive outline as addressed by Fallan (2010; 2019a; 2019b). Considering the umbrella character of social design and its multiplicity of project matters inserted in everyday life — which historical scholarship implies the synthesis of facts within social, cultural and political connections, according to Barros (2005) and Burke (1992) in regard to the dimension of social history — this proposal converges with the contemporary condition that privileges the historiography of design within broader nexuses, as expressed by Braga (2020), Midal (2019) and Teasley (2019). Nevertheless, the intertwining of four decades of social design with undergraduate courses in the Brazilian scenario links with the domain of history of education, as addressed by Bastos (2006; 2016) and Stephanou and Bastos (2005), in topics such as pedagogical ideas and educational practices, as well as history of university subjects and educational institutions.

Furthermore, the triangulation of ‘social design – design history – design education’ focuses on the approach of microhistory and the emphasis on the everyday practices of specific communities, besides its concern with documentary sources, according to Levi (1992) and Barros (2007), from the study of the particular as a starting point towards the identification of its meaning in light of its own context. Therefore, this doctoral investigation seeks to contextualize the institutional development

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<sup>5</sup> Morris (1834-1896), born in England, was a designer, writer, activist and one of the leaders of the Arts & Crafts movement, which criticised the impacts of the Industrial Revolution and advocated for the social role of the designer and the understanding of design as part of the productive system, of the organisation of society and as a right for all.

<sup>6</sup> Gropius (1883-1969), born in Germany, was an architect and the founder of the historical Bauhaus school. Gropius aimed to make art, architecture and design accessible to all.

<sup>7</sup> Fuller (1895-1983), born in the United States, was a designer and developed research, products and experimental structures that sought to anticipate the problems to be faced by humanity.

<sup>8</sup> The concept of ‘Design for the Good Society’ was developed by scholars who participated in five biennial meetings held in Utrecht, Netherlands, between 2005 and 2015, in which social design was the core of the debates. In contrast to design oriented towards the economic value of products and services governed by market laws, the ‘Utrecht Manifesto’ expressed the ten theses elaborated at the end of the series of events (Bruinsma, 2016).

of social design in education, research and university extension in Brazil, from the embryonic case of PUC-Rio onwards (Cossio, Almendra & Carvalho, 2022a; 2022b).

### 3. Three histories of social design in Brazil

As part of a renewed interest on social design as topic of inquiry, which has been highlighted by Armstrong et al. (2014), Chen et al. (2015), Hasdell & Bruyns (2018), Tonkinwise (2019 [2015]), Ferrara et al. (2020), Katoppo (2022) and Kaszynska (2021; 2022), the theme has been also the focus of articles published in Brazilian congresses proceedings and journals on a constant basis. The state of the art described on three literature reviews centred in social design in Brazil comprises a wide range of project matters in participatory methodologies within the community sphere, tangled with craftwork, education, urban renovation, heritage and cultural identity etc. Mostly, the academic production on social design consists of reports of actions in the interrelations of design pedagogy with university extension programs of several private and public institutions located in the five regions of the country (Cossio, 2020; Côrrea & Guilherme, 2022; Lepre, 2018). Additionally, the occurrence of two papers exploring aspects of social design within mainstream accounts of design history is understood as an initial lack of historical research on the topic in the Brazilian context.

#### 3.1 *Projeto Básico* and *A Barraca* [Basic Project and The Tent], two master's theses

In retrospect, both Couto (1991; 1993) and Pacheco (1996a; 1996b) mention the scarcity of documentation on social design at the PUC-Rio archives, which was restricted to professors' reports. The manifesto issued by professors Lélia Gonzalez<sup>9</sup>, Elmer Barbosa<sup>10</sup> and collaborators on the occasion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the Latin American Association of Industrial Design - ALADI, held in November 1984, in Rio de Janeiro, is conceived as the first document about social design at PUC-Rio, which stated three key-pedagogical factors of this domain in undergraduate design, such as: emphasis on the process; native themes; and practical results within the students formation.

*Projeto Básico* [Basic Project] was a subject in the realm of social design, at the first semester of the so-called Industrial Design undergraduate course at PUC-Rio, common to the academic qualifications in Product Design and Visual Communication, and aimed to introduce the students to the dynamics of the design process. In this sense, according to Couto (1991; 1993), the effective participation of a partner group in most of the process was the core of the approach, towards an in-depth understanding of a given real context, with the identification of issues and decision-making conjointly with the interested parties. The free choice of theme and context by the students was followed by the collection of data regarding the social group in focus, with research on relevant knowledge for the project in question, as well as the identification and analysis of similar situations. Posterior to sessions of brainstorming for the generation of ideas, both in the classroom and at the project site, together with the population involved, the selection of the most viable alternative was guided by factors such as technical knowledge, construction time, materials and other available resources. Next, the construction of models, prototypes, layouts, posters etc. allowed experimentation and a critical view of the designed artefact.

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<sup>9</sup> Gonzalez (1935-1994) was an anthropologist, philosopher, historian, feminist and militant of the Brazilian black movement of the 1970s and the 1980s, when she also actively participated in the struggle for the re-democratization of the country (Barreto, 2005; Viana, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Barbosa worked as a professor of Art History at PUC-Rio during the 1970s and the 1980s.

Thus, Couto (1991; 1993) emphasizes the innovative nature of this design pedagogy, which promotes teamwork and interaction with diverse social actors, besides its contribution to student autonomy through dialogue and joint reflection on project opportunities not contemplated by industrial pragmatism. The challenge for students in real project situations is also acknowledged, since the development of artefacts would be used by the social group involved, even in terms of objects of low complexity. Among the teaching-learning strategies employed by Couto (1991; 1993), it is worth mentioning the development schedule, the oral and written presentation of follow-up reports and brainstorming, which enabled exchanges between teams of different projects in the same class. In order to substantiate the project, an interdisciplinary exercise was promoted, encouraging students to search for information along with the other theoretical and practical disciplines of the course and other knowledge, inside and outside the university. Overall, Couto (1991; 1993) would become a reference for Pacheco (1996a; 1996b).

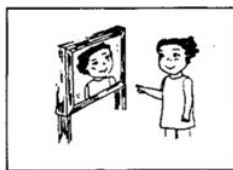


Fig. 1. Televisão com tela de espelho.



Fig. 2. Brincadeiras com música e dança.

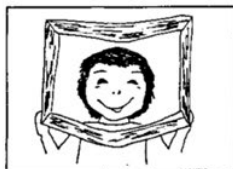


Fig. 3. Televisão sem tela que seria enfiada na cabeça.

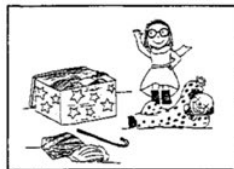


Fig. 4. Brincadeiras com fantasias de personagens preferidos.



Figure 1. Sample of student work in the subject of Projeto Básico [Basic Project]. Front view of A Barraca [The Tent] during a class in 1993. Sources: Couto (1991) and [www.dad.puc-rio.br/historia-dad/barraca-da-ana-branco](http://www.dad.puc-rio.br/historia-dad/barraca-da-ana-branco)

A Barraca [The Tent], is a shelter/object/medium for the teaching-learning of social design, built in a natural environment, between two jackfruit trees, on the campus of PUC-Rio. The structure was idealised by professor Ana Branco in 1988 and had different versions and reconstructions throughout the 1990s. Based on the premise of favouring intuition and affection by students and external collaborators involved in project development in a space strongly marked by experimentation, the proposal sought an alignment with the conception of social design practiced at the institution, officially, since 1982, which had been improved through the experiences of professors Ripper and Branco. Nevertheless, Pacheco (1996a; 1996b) stresses that social design, as a hallmark of the course, consists of a methodological approach in the realm of project teaching, which encourages direct investigation in a real context, so that, in addition to stimulating creativity and critical sense, the immersion enables the student to discover the values of the surrounding culture.

Concerning the theoretical framework for the teaching-learning of social design since the previous decade at PUC-Rio, Pacheco (1996a; 1996b) cites sociologist Jean Baudrillard and the critique of conservatism in design; designer Gui Bonsiepe and policies around the insertion of the activity in peripheral economies; designer Victor Papanek and the calling for designing in a 'real world'; and architect and designer Christopher Alexander, who took the user into account in the democratization of design. Furthermore, Pacheco (1996a; 1996b) establishes differences between conventional education and 'means of learning', as these do not constitute successive moments of evolution and occur according to specific characteristics of contexts: "learning is something common between students and professors and pursues discovery, something that one enjoys and takes care of (...) it aims to emphasise the process of making and incorporates the student into a reality given by

society” (p. 3). These didactic-pedagogical factors, as opposed to the transmission of a hierarchical knowledge that competes with the progressive maturation of students, pave the way for social design education.

### 3.2 *Projetando Produtos Sociais* [Designing Social Products], a book

Nascimento Silva (2009a; 2009b) stresses that the design activity has suffered the pressures imposed by the capitalist system over the last decades, which implied distance of the field from public and social policies. The main aspects causing this gap have been the process of globalization, the search for innovation and competitiveness, the focus on profits with the expansion of markets, besides a lack of governmental recognition around design and the potential of its social agenda. Thus, there has been a stimulus to irresponsible consumption, and consequently, to the design of products uncompromised with real societal needs. In this sense, the production of disposable items has been expanded while materials and processes that cause environmental impacts have been adopted and styling has been encouraged in order to improve sales.

However, the designing of social artefacts would be enabled by establishing partnerships with non-governmental organizations, labour unions, cooperatives and community-based associations. Thus, project development would be strengthened with the contribution of human and social sciences, in relation to studying environmental and cultural factors of diverse groups and ethnicities, which would encompass local history and artistic and religious manifestations of communities. The actions would be driven by the role of the State in the elaboration of public policies regarding the production of material culture, with support for companies and industries with effective social responsibility, in view of the reduction of inequalities. Therefore, this articulation would transcend unbridled consumerism and the degradation of nature, in terms of sustainability, inclusion and accessibility, from the youth to the elderly, in various spheres that lack initiatives in design, such as education, culture, sport, agriculture, housing, sanitation, environment, transport, work, health, security, civil defense, etc.

Considering the liberal economy inflows in design education, Nascimento Silva (2009a; 2009b) addresses that the curriculum matrices of undergraduate courses are marked by a strong emphasis on the preparation of a designer aligned with laws and principles of the market and oblivious to social matters. Based on this premise, the scholar has been developing pedagogical actions in the scope of social design in undergraduate courses at the Regional University of the Northwest of the State of Rio Grande do Sul - Unijuí (2000-2005), at the West University of Santa Catarina - Unoesc (2006-2007) and at the Federal University of Pernambuco - UFPE (2008-present).

The first conclusion of Nascimento Silva (2009a; 2009b) on his teaching experience refers to the observation of an immediate change in academic attitudes after conducting a social project. Typically, when most students enter the curricular component, they are dazzled by the allure of projects aimed at the inherent consumption of capitalism. At the end of the social design activities, students develop the necessary critical sense and a new perception of their social responsibility as designers. The author also underlines that socially designing products does not mean charity, neither momentary solidarity campaigns nor welfarism, as some professionals may argue. On the contrary, it means the contribution of the field of design towards counterbalancing social inequalities.

When highlighting the ethical limits of this economic model of enormous social discrepancies, Nascimento Silva (2009a; 2009b) questions our legacy: “of an extremely materialistic and individualistic society or of a responsible society concerned with the community and with other species?” (p. 94). Hence, the scholar relates the field of design with the utopian element towards a new order, beyond the current capitalist regulations.





Figure 2. *Projetando Produtos Sociais* [Designing Social Products] book cover. Virtual card for the Design Social [Social Design] round table. Sources: Nascimento Silva (2009a) and School of Design IFSul (2021).

### 3.3 *Design Social* [Social Design], a round table

At the opening of the panel<sup>11</sup>, Pozatti introduces the theme in relation to the worsening of social and environmental issues that have also amplified the discussion on the impacts caused by design, leading professionals to consider the moral aspects of their work. Among the several terminologies used to characterize design oriented to social causes, the denomination of social design is considered a multifaceted umbrella in terms of theory and practice.

When it comes to how the debaters envisage the concept of social design and present themselves professionally, Dias mentions the social role of the designer with a critical view on positive and negative impacts in a given context of action. In face of social design as a transversal approach in relation to the various qualifications of the field, Dias sees no point in calling himself a 'social designer', but a 'designer'. Following, Uriartt corroborates this transversality around valuing human capital and strengthening communities, and underlines this approach as opposed to market-oriented design. In turn, Veiga introduces herself as a 'social designer' with the political intention of making a stand, as well as making a different type of design: the idea of social design has to do with how we design. It is easy and true to manifest that 'all design is social' due to the fact that various design practices focus on everyday life, however, the way of making it inverts the roles and takes away from the specialist the exclusivity in dictating what is useful and viable. This character would distinguish social design as a political position, according to Veiga, as it considers that there are ways of making things that are more engaging, fair and sustainable. In this sense, Miolo expands the scope of social design beyond working with vulnerable groups, to also encompass new ways of organizing society towards the common good, and therefore the role of the designer in social innovation is that of a catalyst and facilitator of interaction between people in the development of methods and tools in terms of communication and sociability.

<sup>11</sup> Among the debaters, Caio Miolo is an Italian-Brazilian designer and PhD in Design at the University of Lisbon; Erica Andrade, born in Bahia, Brazil, is a designer, MSc. of Design, and PhD candidate in Administration at the Federal University of Bahia; Inês Veiga is a Portuguese designer, professor and PhD in Design at the University of Lisbon; L. Josué Dias, born in Bahia, Brazil, is a designer with a focus on black representativeness and sustainability; and Simone Uriartt is a Brazilian designer and a consultant in social innovation and human-centred governance. The panel was mediated by Melissa Pozatti, a Brazilian designer, researcher and educator.



In retrospect, Andrade mentions the criticism of the Industrial Revolution by the Arts & Crafts movement and the Bauhaus school as examples that alternative notions of design have always existed but remained on the sidelines of capitalism, whereas the conception of design that drives it is the one that prevailed. Furthermore, Andrade understands social design as a demand from the field of design in relation to the moment we live, that is, a critical view of the wider context and also of the field, in opposition to the *status quo* and the capitalist system that prevents all design from being 'social'. Additionally, this system co-opts and appropriates ideas such as sustainability and participation, which requires attention from those working in the realm of social design. As an alternative approach, according to Andrade, social design is conceived as a political space for debate and construction, in the inseparability between theory and practice of an ever-changing definition uneasy with conventional designing.

Regarding the current challenges of design education, Uriartt cites the recent establishment of design networks and the questioning about whether students and professionals are only mitigating and reducing damage instead of taking on more proactive role in terms of regeneration and resilience, which would transcend mere humanitarian aid. These aspects permeate the thought on our privileges as designers, as well as on situations when we may oppress the community. In turn, Miolo stresses empowerment, which would be giving voice to people so that they can solve their own issues and, therefore, designers learn from people in a given context. Generally, design education still does not prepare to design empathically with people, in counterpoint to solutions imposed by the designer and merely validated with the target audience. Moreover, Dias mentions that the undergraduate design referential is from an idealized world, and not from this real world that is collapsing. Finally, Veiga adds the common sense around design as something accessory, restricted to styling, in spite of an activity concerned with much more than the appearance of objects, which would encompass the idea that we all design and that every human being is a designer of the everyday (School of Design IFSul, 2021).

## 4. Considerations on the 'social' in contemporary design history

Reflecting on contemporary design history in Brazil, Braga (2020) states that the discipline broadens the comprehension of the field of design in relation to its social, cultural and economic demands: "this knowledge helps to develop critical thinking to understand the limitations and conditions of the professional activity from the environment in which the designer lives, and helps to envision possibilities and viable paths for a critical role in society" (p. 308). This factor would build up another pillar for the 'social' in regard to the conception of social history of design, conjointly with aspects previously cited by the scholars, such as the vocation for synthesis of facts with broader nexuses and the variance of individual experiences in shared conditions, besides the interdisciplinary character in discursive interventions. Furthermore, once the social matter is the pinnacle of contemporary design history, along with a fresh interest on alternative approaches, investigations on the entanglements of design research with social history and microhistory become relevant, as well as on the tensions with other established forms of social history, such as social history of art or social history of ideas.

The evidences analysed in this panorama would allow stepping aside of the regular generalisation and basic polemic that 'all design is social', as also pointed out by Brazilian designers and researchers Redig (2011) and Almeida (2018). Historically, the guidelines expressed by Couto (1991; 1993), Pacheco (1996a; 1996b), Nascimento Silva (2009a; 2009b) and School of Design IFSul (2021) endorse that social design is specified by a sociopolitical approach concerned with the everyday, besides the action of designing as common good. Pedagogically, the scholars underline that social design is specified by a teaching-learning methodology in terms of interaction and teamwork with a partner

group from a real context, alongside with a critical view of the field of design in face of social inequalities and looming ecological crisis. Therefore, the place of social design in the discipline of design history would be research on the links of design and utopia in accordance with current humanistic values — the intertwining of the field with notions of the common good to be updated by design theory and practice — in order to envisage convincing futures.

This introductory overview leads to the next questions in the domain of history of design education: how has the teaching-learning of social design been developed? What can be described regarding social responsibility and experimentation within the design culture of the discontent? The study would improve with the oral history method and with a greater variance in terms of experiences and documentary sources in the Brazilian scenario, such as the manifesto issued at the 3<sup>rd</sup> ALADI conference in 1984, followed by analyses on pedagogical practices, along with student work, curriculum studies and reports of university extension programs. Considering the reinvigorated historical scholarship in the scopes of regionalism and female protagonism in the country in the last decade, as indicated by Braga (2020), these focuses would certainly offer valuable additions to the histories of social design in Brazil. Namely, the contribution of professor Lélia Gonzalez, from the perspectives of gender, race, political activism and migration studies, towards an interdisciplinary conception of social design taught at PUC-Rio in the 1980s is yet to be unfolded.

The curricula implemented at PUC-Rio following Papanek's series of lectures and workshops — both of which also lack historical lenses, the events and its inflows in the renewed curricula — expanded the contours of this practice, according to Couto (2017), and contributed to the university's bachelor's degree indelible mark on social design, nationally recognized and with repercussions in various undergraduate courses to the present day. Moreover, the multiple variables of design with social vocation demand the composition of a transdisciplinary body of knowledge that provides theoretical foundation. In this sense, contemporary design history has a key-function.

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