T is for Time to Trust

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This book extends the explorations of design thought and action of the first Does Design Care...? workshop held at Imagination, Lancaster University in September 2017 that investigated different ways to conceptualise, provoke, contest and disrupt care. This illustrated A to Z for the Design of Care is intended to help guide design out of the intractable and entangled challenges we face with care and set it on the path to reconcile the contradictory needs to abstract the gesture of care (its theories) while it grounds the bodiliness of that same gesture (its applications).

An Illustrated* A to Z for the Design of Care

An Illustrated* A to Z for the Design of Care

edited by Paul A. Rodgers, Craig Bremner and Giovanni Innella

* *Each entry in this A to Z was written and illustrated by its author during the Does Design Care [2]...? workshop in Chiba University, Japan. Only a few colours of paper, scissors and glue could be used to produce the illustrations.*

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Introduction

This illustrated A to Z for the Design of Care book was written collaboratively by nearly 50 design researchers and practitioners during the Does Design Care...? [2] workshop held at Chiba University, Japan, 1–3 July 2019. This workshop extended the explorations of design thought and action of the first Does Design Care...? workshop held at Imagination, Lancaster University in September 2017 that investigated different ways to conceptualise, provoke, contest and disrupt care.

Care is not usually a word that we hear when we talk about design and when the word care has been used it is usually in a context warning designers to act carefully rather than carelessly. Still good advice, but as this A to Z shows, design has dived headlong into completely new fields of care – particularly social care and health care – at exactly the same time as the service of Care has been instrumentalised so it can be Capitalised and extrapolated so it can be served in equal parts excessively, efficiently and inefficiently. In a circular mix of remarks Bifo Berardi, referring to Yuval Harari (who must have been thinking of Foucault) states that "Twentieth century medicine aimed to heal the sick. Twenty-first century medicine is increasingly aiming to upgrade the healthy" Harari explains that "Healing the sick was an egalitarian project. ... In contrast, upgrading the healthy is an elitist project". Updating Foucault's notion that diagnosing what is ill is always equally about enforcing what is healthy.

As a result the challenges in care systems have become intractable. There have been divide and conquer approaches to responsibility and accountability in care that act to cripple our ability to engage with the speculative and systemic approaches that design offers. Imagination has been cauterized by a risk-averse, Neo-liberal culture – the same culture that also profits enormously from turning care into a transaction. This illustrated A to Z for the Design of Care might help guide design out of these intractable and entangled challenges and set it on the path to reconcile the contradictory needs to abstract the gesture of care (its theories) while it grounds the bodiliness of that same gesture (its applications).

T is for Time to Trust

"Trust is probably the most significant theme of our times." (Schouwenberg, 2019). The 2016 social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook were flooded with "fake news" during the US presidential elections (Howard et al., 2017). Carole Cadwalladr reported that computer scientists hijacked our democracy in the Great British Brexit Robbery. Many companies purporting to offer environmentally friendly products, services, practices and technologies have been accused of greenwashing. Does design care? According to Scott Burnham the paradigm has changed, it's not only design functionality that counts, consumers want to trust that companies and designers have also taken care of environmental and social issues. Can you design trust? Can you trust design? Can design save the world? When issues such as climate change, refugees and pollution seem to be defeating governments, global agencies and other organisations that are supposed to be finding solutions. (Fairs, 2017). Dutch designer and environmentalist Babette Porcelijn explains that "Scientists can show us what we should not do, but we need designers to show us what we should do. Designers have the power to solve the world's problems, but it may mean creating more systems and less stuff" (Porcelijn, 2017) It would appear that a 'collective conscience' and an activism is emerging following a lengthy period where the design world had "lost its moral compass, turning its back on social, political and environmental issues. Designers frittered their problem-solving talents on trivial or indulgent projects." (Fairs, 2017). Li Edelkoort explains that when confronted with "human designed disasters and manmade political scandals paralyzing our planet, people's recourse becomes faith, especially in moments of bewildering despair, we need to trust our instincts to build a better future, full with genuine love towards ourselves and others, even those at fault". (Edelkoort, 2016). It is time to trust, to actively collaborate to address the challenges of the Anthropocene and certain extinction.

Conclusions

Design once identified itself as a collaborator with the owners of the means of production. Now it collaborates mostly with the owners of the means of behaviour manipulation and care falls into this category. One of the paradoxes built into design is the impossibility between what design does and what it dreams of doing. Without grasping the Capital context of care and design's inherent impossibilities, the enthusiastic embrace of care might appear somewhat opportunistic. It is worth asking how much care, in particular health care, is in fact just opportunistic. People appearing to need care are perfect, soft targets for something that we design and call care, leading to something imitating care. As a result design solutions becomes anecdotes and individual stories fitting design into its newish fictional guise. With the maturing of the service economy eventually people just wanted to be served. With the rapid rise and maturing of the caring economy will people just want to be cared for?

This A to Z looks into the questions of what do we mean when we speak 'care'; what do we mean when we think 'care'; where do we locate care (as a gesture); and where do we locate the idea of care (as value)? Alongside the impossibilities lie possibilities and this illustrated A to Z guide into what is a new era for design and care feels a way, provides some handy hints, makes some suggestions and continually asks questions – can design avoid getting entangled in care's transactional vector? Does design really need fictions to approach care? Above all, in these dark times can we begin to care for design? The authors of this A to Z have illustrated evocative accounts for the design of care.

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