Money, Change, and Individual Agency

On Socially Responsible Design in a Market Economy

Drawing By Studio Boot

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Abstract

The notion of socially responsible design is historically constructed as a distinct *modus operandi*, a paradigm that is contrasted against a commercial market-driven paradigm. The assumed ‘money over morals’ approach is often considered to be too restrictive, too cosmetic and too undemocratic. Additionally, several significant events in the last two decades (financial crisis, migrant crisis, increasing globalisation) have caused an increasing engagement with the social sphere. In a reaction, creative advisory bodies such as the Dutch Creative Council, have called upon the creative industries as they are deemed to be an important contributor of creative solutions to societal challenges in areas such as care, safety, energy and climate. Nevertheless, one may wonder whether the designer can fulfil this promising role. According to the Dutch CBS, a far majority of design and advertising companies are self-employed. Participating in the market economy is thus critical for the larger part of the businesses who seek to make a living working fulltime as a designer. Rejecting commercial projects for the greater social good is, therefore, not an obvious choice. Recent academic debates have deemed the seemingly binary opposites of the market model and the social model delusional and ultimately naïve. Several academics, therefore, suggest a shift in perspective: from *responsible* design to *responsive* design. In this regard, graphic designers have an interesting position within the broad spectrum of the creative industries. Most often than not do these types of designers lack the control over resources that would allow them to set their own agendas and to enforce them. This thesis seeks to go to the heart of the creative industries by examining how designers navigate between ideas around responsibility, change and activism in combination with commissioned job opportunities in the private sector. A series of interviews with three socially engaged graphic designers in the private sector accompanied by an analysis of their visual works are the two main methods of inquiry.
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Introduction

On first glance, the culture industries seem to be a breeding ground for all sorts of activism pursuing progressive, social change. And it is true, we have seen astonishing cultural products addressing political concerns or practices that contemplate the question of sustainability and social progress. For example, the sculpture *Anatomy of Identity* (see fig. 1) by Victor Sonna openly discusses issues around cultural identity by asking: who am I and who is the other? (Sonna). Aside from sculpture, the cultural industries include many more mediums that address social issues, ranging from films, research-based art, and graphic design. It has been clear that the role of the contemporary graphic-designer has also come to include the notion of social responsibility. The *First Things First* manifesto from 1964, for example, is an early testament of this inclination. This development was strengthened even further by the highly influential book from the hands of Victor Papanek entitled: *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* (1970). The work of the visionary designer, critic and activist formed the catalyst for ideas on progressive change through “inclusive design and, in business and corporate contexts, a triple bottom line of social, environmental and economic factors” (Melles, et al. 143). This “socially useful” paradigm, often understood as “‘those areas of the economy which are not geared to private profitability’” (Thorpe and Gamman 217-18), has become quite successful over the years.

Exemplary here is Foundation We Are, a multidisciplinary Dutch design agency that focusses on creative projects that integrate social, cultural, and economic values in order to innovate and to transform social

and legal systems. Along the way, the studio employs design perspectives that derive from the ‘socially useful’ paradigm, for example, co-design; a participatory method that includes stakeholders at every step of the process. Nevertheless, one may wonder how the designer can fulfil this promising role within the market-driven paradigm of the creative industries. By studying the portfolio’s of studio’s and designers that focus especially on socially responsible design, it becomes apparent that many projects are self-initiated or are realised with funds from the European Union, local municipalities or organisations such as the Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie or The Mondriaan Fonds. It seems that the notion of social responsibility mainly proliferates in the public sphere rather than in the commercial, private sphere. Does this mean that the idea of socially responsible design is not suited for the commercial sector? And if so, how do designers answer the call for responsible design in an environment that prioritises consumer-led design that goes far beyond the idea of meeting human needs, namely to create human desire and to make a profit? (Thorpe and Gamman 217). This thesis seeks to go to the heart of the creative industries by examining how designers navigate between ideas around responsibility, change and activism in combination with commissioned job opportunities in the private sector. The question, therefore, will be as follows: “in which ways do Dutch graphic-designers practise the notion of social responsibility in a market-driven economy?”.

The focus on graphic designers in the Netherlands is not just an arbitrary choice. First, The Netherlands has a strong graphic design culture. The notion of Dutch Design has encompassed many things over the years including Dutch industrial design but also the Dutch art movement De Stijl which finds its visual character reverberated throughout modernism. As a part of the Dutch Design movement, Dutch graphic design gained international recognition in the 1970s and the 1990s (Meroz and Gimeno-Martínez 213). Aside from the many educational opportunities to foster new talents – see, for example, the Design Academy in Eindhoven or the university of arts in Utrecht (HKU) – Dutch design platforms such as the Dutch Design Week or the Graphic Matters festival have risen to prominence over the years. Secondly, it seems that the agency of the graphic
designer in the development of finished, market-ready products is less influential than, for instance, product designers. This is a significant detail, as finished products do not appear from a vacuum but are often part of complex (social) design scenarios (Thorpe and Gamman 223). Adam Thorpe and Lorraine Gamman, both professors of Design, suggest that social design proposals are responsive to context and are typically responsive to the assets and resources available to make novel ideas meet social goals. For product designers, a group that has been at the forefront of many studies regarding responsible design, these assets and resources are arguably larger than graphic designers who often find themselves at the later stages of the product development process. In such cases, where the designer needs to work with already established product values, graphic designers cannot “force” socially responsible choices. However, they can still “seek consensus and create conditions that foster it [...] – and that has to be good enough” (233).

Thirdly, the market-driven environment of Dutch designers cannot be regarded as a minor force. According to the Dutch CBS, a large majority of design and advertising companies are self-employed (fig. 2). Funds and subsidies only go so far in supporting the sector. They are, for example, subject to a heavy selection process, operate under strict guidelines and are only available for a limited amount of time. Participating in the market economy is thus critical for the larger part of the businesses who seek to make a living working fulltime as a designer. The notion of practising socially responsible (Dutch) design in a neoliberal context, therefore, deserves academic attention and research. The question central to this thesis aims to

provide valuable, scholarly insights into everyday design processes, that can contribute to a better understanding of a notion that is seemingly gaining interest nationally and internationally. Victor Margolin, Professor Emeritus of Design History and founder of the academic design journal *Design Issues*, attest to the idea of more research on social design. In a co-authored article entitled: *A ‘Social Model’ of Design: Issues of Practice and Research*, Margolin describes that there is a serious “lack of research to demonstrate what a designer can contribute to human welfare” (Margolin and Margolin 28). He continued to argue for a broad research agenda concerning social design, including questions such as: what role can a designer play in a collaborative process of social intervention? And: what is currently being done in this regard and what might be done? Margolin expanded his call for academic action to the inclusion of several research methods that might be employed to gather the required data. The thesis seeks to apply two of them. First, a set of interviews with designers in order to “gather information on perceptions and attitudes” (28). Questions may include inquiries about how designers are making compromise in their visual work for the sake of social responsibility or how much discretion a designer holds in commissioned assignments. Secondly, a visual analysis of projects by the interviewees accommodates an evaluation of how designers translate sociable ideas into finished designs (28). The case studies are selected based on their prior engagement with socially responsible projects and their being for-profit companies or organizations.

## 1. Theoretico-Methodological Framework

### 1.1 Responsible design: history, approaches and new perspectives

Design as a social act; a meaningful notion that has gained increasing significance over recent years. Teal Triggs, Professor of Graphic Design, labels the phenomenon a social design movement that prioritises enabling “individuals, institutions and communities to build better lives and futures” (Triggs 140). She speaks of a renewed sense of
advocacy in the design community where designers have moved beyond predominantly commercial assignments. For instance, many portfolios have come to include non-profit organisations or businesses in the public sector. Nevertheless, the ideas of the social aspect of design did not appear from one day to the next. The concept traces its origin to a publication that some have called the “‘bible of the responsible design movement’” (Fineder and Geisler 100). The bible in question is Victor Papanek’s book *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* which is considered to be a key text in the debate around social design responsibility in a post-industrial era. After its first publication in 1971, the book has seen several revisions and translations which have led to remarkably different receptions. Initially, the publication was considered to be a controversial text, but by its revival in the mid-1980s, the book had become a historical document rather than a novel blueprint for the social design movement. Reactions on the book were, therefore, heavily dependent on the cultural perspective in which Papanek’s message was consumed (104, 105). Nonetheless, the agenda behind Papanek’s arguments remained the same throughout the years. The design critic and activist rooted for the “reprogramming of the designer rather than a reappraisal of the state of play of the consumer society” (Jackson 307). The main idea presented by Papanek is that a designer ought to be an individual outfitted with a functional, fixed moral work ethic who is only to solve specific problems by only accepting specific designer assignments. His ideology seeks to side-step design formalism and the self-conscious stylization in the name of function and is conditioned on the dismissal of many of the features of neoliberal consumerism, much to the annoyance of the then design establishment (307-8). At the basis of Papanek’s reprogramming agenda lays the discretion of the designer. With every new assignment, the designer must consider whether the greater social good will benefit his design. “Social and moral judgment must be brought into play long before he begins to design, since he has to make a judgment, an *a priori* judgment at that, as to whether the products he [*sic*] is asked to design or redesign merit his attention at all” (308).

Another and even earlier document that identified designers as a potential agent of
social change is the *First Things First Manifesto*. Conceived by British graphic designer Ken Garland in 1964, the manifesto was a response to a new social climate admits “‘the high-pitched scream of consumer selling’” (Soar 572). The document, co-signed by at least thirty-two influential members of the design community, was updated in the autumn of 1999, where it appeared in at least six publications. Moreover, the latest version of the manifesto also saw a publication in the popular Dutch graphic design magazine *Items*. The manifesto was aimed in particular towards graphic designers who were directly addressed as “cultural intermediaries” (571). The term, conceived by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, describes those who “‘perform the tasks of gentle manipulation’ of tastes” (Smith Maguire 16). This concept suits the graphic designer very well, as their livelihood depends on the ability to successfully swirl values and affections within culture. By visually articulating these values and preferences, they play an essential role in lending momentum to the contemporary systems of capital accumulation (Soar 571). This traditional discourse of design, manufacturing demand for inessential products, is what the manifesto aims to combat. The message is simple, they propose a “reversal of priorities in favour of more useful, lasting and democratic forms of communication – a mind-shift away from product marketing and toward the exploration and production of a new kind of meaning” (Emigre).

The sentiment expressed in the manifesto and Papanek’s book has carried over to the present day. Contemporary designers and design researchers have shown their discontent of neoliberalism and identified it as the grounds of the erosion of social values by the “hijacking” of governance and politics (Markussen 160). Additionally, several significant events in the last two decades have caused an increasing engagement with the social sphere. The 2008 financial crisis, for instance, led to growing social inequality, cuts in public services, foreclosures, and high debts. Increasing globalisation in the production of goods led to rising numbers of unemployment, and the European migrant crisis challenged the public services (160). In an attempt to protect the decline of the welfare state, policymakers have encouraged the creative industries to take social responsibility and to help resolve complex societal problems (161). Exemplary here is
the *Second Creative Manifest 2016*, a policy statement from the Dutch Creative Council, who deemed the creative industries as an important contributor of creative solutions to societal challenges in areas such as care, safety, energy, and climate. Moreover, the Dutch Raad Voor Cultuur, the government’s legal advisory body, named their policy paper for the design sector: *A Plea for Creative Reflection on Social Issues*. In their publication from 2018, they identify that designers play an essential role in “large social transitions” and that there is an increased demand for “design power” (Raad Voor Cultuur 49).

Nevertheless, the notion of social design is still a rather clouded concept according to design and communication scholar Thomas Markussen, who argues that throughout theory and practice, the discipline of social design has become increasingly multifaceted. Exact definitions of the term are consequently lacking; “it seems to deter anyone from trying to say exactly what social design is” (Markussen 162). Markussen suggests that the possible cause of this problem lies within the terminological conflation of terms such as ‘social design’ and ‘social innovation’ or ‘social entrepreneurship’. Subsequently, a clarification of the term ‘social design’ is necessary, according to the scholar, and can potentially be found in the definition presented by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council:

“The term social design highlights the concept and activities enacted within participatory approaches to researching, generating, and realising new ways to make change happen towards collective and social ends, rather than predominantly commercial objectives.” (162).

In his analysis, Markussen dissects this definition in two clear-cut criteria. First, social design is defined by distinctive, participatory, working, and operating methods. Secondly, social design prioritises collective and social ends over commercial ambitions. It becomes clear that this particular definition constructs the notion of social design as a distinct *modus operandi*, a paradigm that “is more or less contrasted against a commercial market-driven paradigm” (162). The market-driven paradigm is often identified as a market economy that goes way beyond the concept of fulfilling human needs and is characterised by the tendency...
to constantly stimulate human desires for the sake of profit (Thorpe and Gamman 217).

By these definitions, social entrepreneurship can not be regarded as being part of ‘social design’ for social entrepreneurs are entangled with the concern to also perform financially. Some scholars go so far as to dismiss the idea of social enterprises completely. They base their logic on the presupposition that the neoliberal market system is incapable to match social needs, arguing that the services of such businesses are too expensive for those that need them or that the social problems are simply too complex to be addressed from a profit-seeking approach (Markussen 163). However, the critique goes deeper than these typical market failures. Activist and writer Michael Edwards, for example, argues that social enterprises who employ corporate social responsibility policies, “only provide a quick, cosmetic fix for deeper structural problems” (163). These corporate social responsibility policies often include the notion of the triple-bottom-line. The concept, derived as a direct translation of Papanek’s social agenda, often focuses on sustainability by producing products that have a minimal environmental impact, while also providing financial benefits and, if possible, have a positive influence on society. This is usually accomplished by taking into account the costs and benefits of sustainable practices from an accounting perspective (Melles, et al. 145). However, many academics are questioning the usefulness and meaningfulness of the concept, according to Melles, et al. In their article Socially Responsible Design: Thinking Beyond the Triple Bottom Line to Socially Responsive and Sustainable Product Design they argue that the “commercial and material meanings of the term are clear” but they are “inadequate in addressing the social and environmental impacts” (145). As an example, they point to John Ehrenfeld, a scholar and expert on industrial ecology, who sees triple-bottom-line thinking as nothing more than a cosmetic solution and advocates for more systematic and radical approaches to sustainability in design (145).

Not all socially responsible approaches are thus deemed as equally useful. However, other innovative design methods have been developed that may offer a solution
and are already deemed as essential to the concept of socially responsible design. As becomes clear from the two criteria proposed by Markussen: “social design is defined according to (i) its *modus operandi*, i.e. it’s a specific way of working and operating through ‘participatory approaches’” (Markussen 162). Participatory design, or co-design, is an approach that relocates the expertise and the authority of the designer, and at the same time, changes its role from producer or mediator to the facilitator of a decision-making process. In these approaches, clients and consumers can be regarded as partners in making progressive change; not design *for* a client but *with* a client (Melles, et al. 148). In this sense, the design process in itself becomes a social act. By joining the users and audiences, designers can gain a better understanding of the problems at hand and consequently, create solutions that better fit the social need by bringing together a wide variety of experts and stakeholders. This does not mean that the role of the designer becomes absolute. On the contrary, most designers are experienced in the creative process of visual thinking, finding missing information and are excellent at making essential decisions without having all the necessary information (Sanders and Stappers 15). They, therefore, hold “highly developed skills that are relevant at larger levels of scope and complexity” (15), according to Sanders and Stappers. Additionally, professional designers still provide knowledge that other participants in the process do not possess. For example, they are up to date with novel and emerging technologies and are knowledgeable in production processes in business settings (15).

Because the co-design method has almost become synonymous with the notion of socially responsible design, it has invoked a lively discussion on empowerment, equality, democracy and “civic resistance against systems of power and control” (Markussen 165). Adam Thorpe and Lorraine Gamman in their article *Design with Society: Why Socially Responsive Design Is Good Enough*, for instance, propose that co-design is preferably a fraternalistic method. Fraternalism, according to the authors, is a term to describe an “equitable, mutual and caring concern for and between actors in a project, and towards the project itself” with an exceptional desire for an equitable agency for all agents involved
This way, leadership still plays a role, but it does not necessarily have to reside in a privileged person, discipline, or group (222). However, there have also been recent concerns about the accountability of the designer in the role of a leader or facilitator. Gabriel Arboleda wrote in his article *Beyond Participation: Rethinking Social Design* from 2020, that it is relatively simple for designers to continue implementing their own agendas under the excuse of ‘designing with’, allowing them to appear socially just. Far and foremost because the co-design method generally enables the designer to preserve the ultimate decision-making power (Arboleda 17). This becomes evident from the several deceptive participatory practices Arboleda observed while studying co-design in-action:

- **Participation as labour:** a practice whereby people participate only in the realisation of what the designer has planned,
- **Participation as an information provision:** whereby people participate only in providing information for the designer to integrate into their own design,
- **Deceptive participation:** misleading or pressing participants into accepting what is proposed to them through a participatory process,
- **Manipulative participation:** restricting the options available to participants,
- **Anodyne participation:** letting actors and stakeholders participate in non-decisive or trivial aspects,
- **Participation as everything:** a practice that regards every single form of community engagement as an act of co-design (17).

It thus becomes clear that the co-design method is not without its pitfalls. Moreover, it seems to be the case that there is no place for socially responsible designers in a market-driven paradigm. The assumed ‘money over morals’ approach is considered to be too restrictive, too cosmetic and too undemocratic. It has therefore been suggested that there is a need for a shift in perspective. Adam Thorpe and Lorraine Gamman, for instance, propose a more ‘responsive’ approach to social design rather than a responsible one. The socially ‘responsive’ design practise does not see the designer in the sole role of facilitator but preferably as a “co-actor within a co-design process – sometimes leading
as an expert and sometimes not” (Thorpe and Gamman 219). Key in the two academics notion of responsiveness is their appreciation for context. The often wicked and complex problems at hand, resource requirements and available individual agency, requires that designers need to adapt to the context in which the design project is taking place (219). It is from this premise that their notion of the ‘good enough’ designer arises. The ‘good enough’ designer is regarded to be only responsive to societal challenges rather than to be responsible for them, leveraging materialistic, human and social resources to work with social actors to find ways to solve social issues and achieve community objectives (226).

Good enough social design implies an asset-based approach, a key aspect that assumes that a designer does what it can, responsive to the context of available resources, assets, and individual agency (221, 223). Thorpe and Gamman’s proposal of the good enough, responsive designer, can be read as a direct critique of Papanek’s agenda of designing with an a priori moral and social judgement. Designing with Papanek’s approach in the market-led paradigm is “delusional and ultimately naïve” (220), according to the authors. Far and foremost because such practices do not concern themselves with the power structure that accompanies design production. It is unreasonable to hold the designer entirely and ultimately accountable in a market-led context; such goals are more an “aspiration than a description of any real-world practice” (220). The scholars do not stand alone in their critique of the seemingly binary opposites of the market model and the social model as proposed by Papanek. Margolin and Margolin believe that with his unnuanced take, Papanek limits the possibilities for a social designer. They assume that many professionals share the goals of designers who want to do socially responsible work. The scholars, therefore, see the two paradigms as two poles of a continuum, whereby the difference is defined by “the priorities of the commission rather than by a method of production or distribution” (Margolin and Margolin 25, 27).

Thorpe and Gamman’s notion of power structures within design production is therefore not insignificant. Moreover, a notable example can be found in the difference between two types of designers: the product designer and the graphic designer. Although
both design disciplines include a broad span of activities, traditionally speaking, product designers ‘own’ the product and consequently its solution, whereas industrial or graphic designers are considered to be ‘value adders’. Value adders maximize a product’s commercial value through cosmetic styling, improved usability, optimized user experience and enhanced desirability. Most often than not do these types of designers lack the control over resources that would allow them to set their own agendas and to enforce them (Melles, et al. 149; Thorpe and Gamman 220). Value adders, therefore, have a rather low impact on the product itself and are not often in a position to necessitate the negotiation of social objectives. Additionally, the products of graphic designers, in the social paradigm as well as the market-led paradigm, do not appear from a vacuum but are often part of complex and collaborative design scenarios. Consequently, the individual agency of a designer over the products of designs, participatory or not, is unavoidably subject to compromise (220). Nonetheless, I would argue that with Thorpe and Gamman’s notion of good enough, responsive design, designers still can carry a realistic amount of social responsibility even in a market-led context. Albeit less democratic, less empowering, and less participatory, designers can still “seek consensus and create conditions that foster it [...] – and that has to be good enough” (223).

However, one could come to question if good enough, social design and its associated approaches are actually up to the task in creating large social transitions as is proposed by advisory bodies such as the Dutch Raad Voor Cultuur. Over-exaggerated expectations and excessive claims about the added value of social design could undermine further advancement of the field. In particular, because it hinders the identification of the parameters and procedures to be used to determine the effects of socially responsible design (Markussen 161). Nevertheless, one should take into consideration that social engagement usually happens at the micro- and meso-levels. However small their impact seems to be, they may lead to significant social progression for marginal groups, raise awareness for climate change or help advance and develop policies for public services (166). It is, therefore, essential to closely examine
how designers operate at these levels - also in a more restrictive market paradigm.

Now expectations of social design in a neoliberal setting are adjusted to the ‘real world’, it is necessary to ask ourselves how to measure its possible success. There have been several criteria proposed to determine the success of socially responsible projects, however, many of them are from the outset concentrated on the ‘socially useful’ paradigm and disregard the market-led paradigm altogether. These criteria, for example, include an increased focus on the creation of new jobs within communities, if solutions can be understood, controlled, and maintained on a local level or if communities really need the proposed products (Melles, et al. 149). Although meaningful, these criteria do not take into account the available assets and individual agency of entrepreneurial value adders. Thorpe and Gamman propose a set of criteria, in line with the notion of responsive design, that might better suit their circumstances. These criteria find their basis in the theory of effectuation. Effectuation, according to the scholars, implies that “the future is unpredictable yet controllable” (Thorpe and Gamman 223) and indicates an approach that ensures agency for individual actors within a larger collective design process. Most notably, effectuation draws on the postmodern notion that power exists in social relations and that they are reciprocal; “they involve degrees of both autonomy and dependence” (223). The authors continue to state five principal criteria for effectuated change which are directly applicable to a socially responsive design. In addition, I would like to suggest that these criteria are still valuable and applicable within a market-led setting. Far and foremost because effectuation is one of the most widely cited and advancing theories of entrepreneurship (Matalamäki 928). The proposed criteria are as follows:

- **The bird in the hand principle:** with the assets-based approach of responsive design in mind, this criterion suggests that designers work with what they have and realistically assess what can be achieved.
- **The patchwork quilt principle:** a criterion which proposes that designers focus on establishing partnerships rather than beating competitors. Key to
the principle as an open innovation approach and designates a process of co-creation with self-selecting stakeholders.

- **The affordable loss principle:** describes an approach which suggests that designers do not lose what cannot be afforded. This principle can extend to more than monetary means. For example, losing future job opportunities because of demanding, non-profitable social projects.

- **The lemonade principle:** proposes to exploit unforeseen circumstances, transforming them as opportunities by making use of existing resources.

- **The pilot in the plane principle:** this last principle can be regarded as the primary world view for effectuation. It assumes that effectuation is action-oriented and that actions require decisions. Or in other words: designers can create their own opportunities (Thorpe and Gamman 224; Effectuation.org; InnovationEnglish).

In short, in recent years there has been a renewed sense of advocacy among the creative industries. At the same time, hard-line idea’s around socially responsible design such as outlined in the initial works from Ken Garland and Victor Papanek, have been reinvented to fit a contemporary world view. Participatory design or co-design are methods that stem from this new development. These methods dictate that designers fulfil the role of a facilitator of a design process instead of mediating one. This way, designers join stake-and shareholders in a democratic, decision-making process; not designing for but with a client. Nevertheless, the method depends heavily on social design within a socially ‘useful’ paradigm, meaning a setting which prioritises collective and social ends over commercial aspirations. Some scholars, therefore, deem social design per definition not applicable to a market-led setting, seeing solutions such as the triple-bottom-line as nothing more than a cosmetic fix. Thorpe and Gamman agree with this proposition, deeming socially responsible design in a market paradigm as naive and unrealistic. They, therefore, suggest a shift in perspective, *responsive* design instead of *responsible* design. A principle that suggests that a designer does what it can to maximise a positive social outcome. It
takes into account the context in which the design process takes place, for example, the availability of social and human capital, resources, and individual agency and discretion. Although less democratic, less empowering, and less participatory, designers still can carry a sensible amount of social responsibility in a market-led context this way. In particular, by creating conditions and scenarios that foster it - and yes, that must be good enough.

1.2 Methods

Considering the research question, “in which ways do Dutch graphic-designers practise the notion of social responsibility in a market-driven economy?”, two methods of analysis will be employed. Both of them have been suggested by Margolin and Margolin in their article *A “Social Model” of Design: Issues of Practice and Research* where they argue for the progression of a socially responsible design agenda. First, the authors propose that interviews with designers can be conducted to “gather information on perceptions and attitudes and to solicit suggestions for change” (Margolin and Margolin 28). A significant component of the data collection, therefore, will be based upon interviews with Dutch designers. Interviewing, as a method of qualitative research, is perceived to be a “social arena” which provides both “vehicles and sites through which people construct and contest explications for their views and actions” (James and Busher 12-3). Such environments, therefore, generate a wealth of information on people’s perceptions, emotions and feelings and can be used to construct interpretations, understandings, and representations of subjective experiences (13). As is the case with many interviews, a good and coherent structure, covering all the areas of interest, is essential. Hence, the interviews will be structured roughly around three main themes. The first set of questions will centre around the subject in relation to the notion of socially responsible designing in a market-led context. Questions in this section are, for example: does having a profit-seeking approach hinder you in the ability to make social change? Would you consider yourself in any sense, socially responsible? Or: do you feel implicated by the appeal made by the Dutch
Raad Voor Cultuur? The second set of questions will focus on specific projects that have emerged from social design practices. This particular section hopes to reflect upon the position of designers as value adders and how they use assets such as individual agency, to bring on social change within a complex design process. Questions include inquiries into how certain design decisions were made and how the context of the design process impacted their outcomes. The third and last set of questions will concern themselves with the prospect of socially responsible design within a market system. Questions about what needs to be changed, or how one could expand the responsiveness of designers in a market setting, are expected to be asked here. As becomes apparent from the example questions, the interview is based on open questions. In general terms, open questions cover a wide range of potential answers, allowing the respondent to take the lead in the answer. The answer can then be followed up with more precise questions, depending on the contents of the response (Daphne M. 35). This approach to interviewing allows for a freer dialogue between the participant and the interviewer. The three main categories of questions are therefore not set in stone, but function as the a priori codes on which the interview takes place. The entire time-coded transcripts of the interviews can be found in the appendixes. In an attempt to successfully process the qualitative datasets, the transcripts of the interview will be subjected to coding. Coding is “‘an attempt to fix meaning [by] constructing a particular vision of the world that excludes other possible viewpoints’” (Barbour 261). This analytical approach relies on comparing and contrasting who says what, and in what context, by closely examining responses at a systematic level (272).

Secondly, Margolin and Margolin suggest that research focusing on the development and evaluation of socially responsible products is also necessary (Margolin and Margolin 28). A visual analysis of the outcomes from the design practices of the case studies is thus warranted. Visual analysis, as a method, is firmly rooted within the broad canon of critical theory. Critical theory concentrates primarily on political power struggles between various social classes, institutions, or ideologies in an attempt to increase social consciousness (Stocchetti and Kukkonen 39). The critical approach
is, therefore, often associated with Marxian critique of capitalism. Yet, its origins lie in the classics of Western philosophy and also includes a variety of post-Marxian critique (39). Within the postmodern tradition, the visual is generally regarded to be a *map*, implying that an image is “a constructed and controlled representation of reality” (60). Images such as advertisements, for example, are purposefully designed to please and excite. For instance, key elements are often highlighted for ease of orientation, indicating that viewing the image is worthy of the receiver’s time. These forms of visual rhetoric aim to convey a certain meaning based on social and cultural conventions (60). Consequently, visual imagery is regarded to be a form of social semiotics, or in other words: images can be read (Aiello 383). Giorgia Aiello, Associate Professor in Media and Communication, sets out three principles on which a visual analysis can be conducted:

1. What is the *representational meaning* of an image? In particular, this principle is concerned with the narrative structures of images, or the actions and processes that are visually represented. Additionally, it involves the conceptual structures of images in a classificatory, analytical, or symbolic manner.

2. What is the *interactive meaning* of an image or set of images? By Aiello’s example: what is the person’s gaze, what is the angle of the camera, and what is the size of the frame?

3. What is the *compositional meaning* of an image or set of images? This principle can be deducted further into four areas of interest: (a) information value, or the placement of various elements within the image; (b) salience, or how different elements within the image are made to attract the viewer’s attention to different degrees; (c) framing, or whether and how elements in the visual text are connected or disconnected through devices like spacing or dividing lines; (d) modality, or how more or less real the image or different components of the image are made to look (381-2).

Additionally, other visual planes of expressions, such as materiality and historical context, are also deemed to be relevant (382). These are the principles that will
guide the visual analysis of the case studies. In particular, the analysis will attempt to contextualise the visual decisions made by designers in relation to the socially responsible/responsive design practice.

1.3 Case-study selection criteria

The three case studies are based on their prior engagement with socially responsible projects and their being for-profit companies or organizations. In addition, the study targets designers in the Netherlands in particular, but goes beyond nationality and also includes locality. This is to say that work experience within the creative industries or a formal design study in the Netherlands is ‘good enough’ to be considered a Dutch designer. The portfolios of the company must have a strong tendency towards graphic design. However, since there is no fixed definition of graphic design, this may include a wide variety of visual communications such as advertisements, illustrations, websites, or other projects - online and offline. The three selected case studies are:

**Studio de Ronners**

Studio de Ronners, founded by Arwen and Matthijs Ronner, is a textbook example of a graphic design studio; a strong portfolio including websites, publications, and corporate identities. The brothers have attracted several exciting clients in the arts and culture sector, such as Noorderlicht and the Rotterdam Wildlife Film Festival, but the studio also works with government and semi-government, construction and architectural firms and health and educational institutions. Their portfolio also has a place for more “idealistic goals” (Studio de Ronners), often accomplished on the studio’s own initiative. See, for instance, their project De Kantine, a pop-up dance bar that is temporarily housed in a vacant building to oppose the rising vacancy of retail properties. The visual analysis will, in particular, focus upon their campaign for The International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam promoted by a client that has an interest in the
city in the context of climate change and increasing social inequality.

**Studio Boot**

Almost thirty years ago, Petra Janssen founded Studio Boot. Since its inception, Petra has employed visual language in the form of posters, corporate identities and campaigns to communicate the message of her clients, which stretches from international companies such as Nike to local costumers such as the theatre in their home town of S-Hertogenbosch. Furthermore, in 2011, Petra Janssen founded a non-profit organisation called Social Label. The organisation is a design label that aims to promote an inclusive society through art and design (Kramer). The visual analysis is led by the question of how Studio Boot engages with the social in two similar poster campaigns; the crowd-funded street exposition *Rewrite Your Future* and the posters advertisements for the Leids Cabaret Festival. Where the former arose from a self-initiated social project, the later can be classified as a conventional commissioned assignment. How does Studio Boot navigate between these two modes of commission? Do the symbolic meanings in the visual translation of the assignments change depending on the commissioner? And what can be said about style?

**Foundation We Are**

Foundation We Are is an interesting design collective that made headlines with their project: *We Are Human Rights*. The project, under the umbrella title *We Are Societal Impact*, had a prominent place in the Dutch Design Week 2018. The design consulting agency hopes to achieve a serious transformation in the social and legal system. The foundation employs communication strategies, project development and oversees the implementation of visualisation in projects that are client-based or self-initiated, according to its website (Foundation We Are). In an interview, Bernhard Lenger, chairman of the foundation, elaborates
on what it means to be socially responsible as a designer. He, thereby, points to his experiences in his design practice as well as the role of the foundation. The works of Korean illustrator, graphic designer, and textile designer Daeun Lim, will form the departure of the visual analysis. Next to her position as ‘illustrator in chief’ by Foundation We Are, Daeun has founded her personal Rotterdam based design studio entitled Studio Eemda. Daeun has worked throughout her practice on a variety of projects ranging from visual identities to publications and performances. The visual analysis will take a closer look at a number of designs that emerged from two projects. The first collection of visuals encapsulates multiple illustrations commissioned in 2019 by the Dutch social design collective, Idiotēs. The second case-study is Daeun’s self-imitated project *How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit*, conceived in collaboration with Foundation We Are. The two main questions in this visual inquiry are: how does Daeun practice social responsibility within and beyond the confines of the foundation? And how does she maximise addressing the social through the visual in a client-based and a self-initiated setting?

### 1.4 Limitations

Every study has its limits, and in that respect, this research is no different. The time frame set for this thesis restricts its scope to three case studies, which means that the study is far and a foremost qualitative and exploratory. Nevertheless, they are of essential value because they provide a much-needed insight in a dynamic and quickly developing creative field. In addition, due to the COVID-19 virus, human interaction is limited and therefore has a severe impact on how an interview traditionally would take place. Their outcomes are less personal since certain cues like body language or contextual experiences such as seeing the designer’s studio are missing. As already briefly stated in the methodology chapter, images are ‘readable’ and can conceive meaning. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are only one reading and one meaning. Images can be
interpreted in several ways and can, therefore, give way to varying views depending on, for example, cultural capital. This is to say that, my viewpoints on the various graphics in the visual analysis is not the one correct interpretation and reading. Furthermore, because this writing is primarily interested in social responsibility in a market-led context I sought to include visual projects that also stem from commercial commissioned assignments. However, when employing a conventional definition of ‘commercial commissioned assignments’, these projects seem rather sparse as I previously indicated in the introduction. I, therefore, applied a broader definition of the term to come to include projects that are indirectly and partly funded by municipalities and public grants. First and foremost, because it can be argued that these commissioners, although not private, are still employing a rather neoliberal approach to culture (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 5).

2. Presentation of the case studies

2.1 Case study: Interview Studio De Ronners

A bright beam of sunlight overexposed my web-cammed face. With a slightly nervous posture, I was waiting for my interviewees to call in per video. However, as soon as two friendly faces appeared on the other side of the webcam, my nervousness instantly vanished. The two calm voices with a slight Groning’s accent broke the ice in an instant. Before me, I had Arwen and Matthejs Ronner, brothers and colleagues. Since 2003 they are working together, first under the name De Jongens Ronner but more recently as Studio De Ronners. That choice did not do them any harm as they managed to expand their studio to come to include locations in Groningen, Rotterdam and even Antwerp. They are specialized in developing brands, identities, and campaigns, leading to a wide and diverse portfolio including websites, publications, and corporate identities, according to the designers. Together they have attracted several exciting clients in the arts and culture sector, such as Noorderlicht and the Rotterdam Wildlife Film Festival, but the studio also
works with government and semi-government, construction and architectural firms and health and educational institutions. Their output has not gone by unnoticed. Throughout the years the duo has been nominated and won numerable prices, for example, the European Design Award for the identity application on printed mediums for the Instituut Voor De Nederlandse Taal (Institute for the Dutch Language) or the German Design Award for their project TENT, lauded by the jury for being a “sophisticated, exciting concept that can be used flexibly and in a variety of ways” (German Design Award). Nevertheless, in the midst of substantial commercial clients and smaller projects funded with public money, Studio De Ronners also initiates their own initiatives. Sometimes with a special focus on social issues such as their project De Kantine, a pop-up dance bar that is temporarily housed in an empty building to combat the rising vacancy of retail properties, and sometimes just to discover new fields and possibilities as is the case with SMAKBAR which brought together food, beer and contemporary art (Studio De Ronners).

Nonetheless, Matthijs, the younger of the two, does not regard himself as of being a typical social designer. He sees them as a very distinct group of designers. As an example, Arwen points to the fashion industries where designers are very consciously involved with the materials, their origins, and the methods of production. Instead of deliberately seeking social or environmental goals, Studio De Ronners rolled “more or less accidentally [...] into those projects”. One might come to think that attracting such assignments has to do with active marketing and profiling of the studio. However, that is not the case, according to Arwen. In actuality, it is the other way around: “It is the customer base that gives colour to who we are”. Matthijs adds to this by stating that the work they produce colours the identity of the studio. However, the brothers do not forget to mention that in large part these projects are in their field of interest: “we [...] enjoy doing these kinds of assignments”. This is the main reason why parties tend to select Studio De Ronners, according to Arwen. “because we are working with that background and we have a link with it and a certain feeling about it”.

This is also a leading factor in the studio’s own initiatives. Projects such as De Kantine just “come by”, based on a feeling and the idea that it suits the studio. In this particular case, it started with a raised awareness of the many empty retail properties and office buildings and the question of how an agency can mean more than design. How the studio could function as a platform, an initiative that shows what is possible and, “that you link the social to that as well”, Matthijs explains. This is where the brothers feel socially responsible, especially in the sense that, as designers, they help to develop solutions for problems they themselves help to identify. The feeling of social responsibility in this form also extends to the daily practice of the studio, especially when it comes to assignments that involve public money, according to Matthijs.

“Then you have to ask quite rightly, also as an agency, how do we deal with this?” According to Arwen, this is reflected in the sharp questions they ask their clients, he calls it “holding up a mirror to your clients”. The designers want their client to really think about if certain activities/promotions are necessary, or if there are other ways one can spend public money, especially given the available budget.

Arwen and Matthijs thus far indicate that in the (semi) public realm, they as designers hold a substantial amount of discretion. However, in the light of Thorpe and Gamman’s notion of power structures, are these possibilities also tangible within a more commercial setting? Arwen’s answer is resolute: “the commercial sector does not ask for it”. “Yes, or they ask for it, but then it’s more for greenwashing”, Matthijs adds. Nonetheless, the designers still must work with them; “the studio has to run, too”. However, it does create a kind of tension, Arwen admits. The brothers do see the public sector and the commercial sector as two different entities. Where the former serves primarily as a public and social benefit, the latter is merely there to sell products or to offer services, often with enough money to produce a complete and functional campaign with top of the bill artwork. The balances are, therefore, different says Arwen. Openness here is key, he continues. “We always try to do as lean as possible. That the client and contractor are clear and honest to each other, with the idea of ‘yes, this is what we can support and can get behind’”. This does not mean that everything is so black and white,
however. Some projects allow the commercial and the public to overflow into each other. As an example, the designers point to their work for WarmteStad, an initiative from the municipality of Groningen and the Groningen Water Company to make the city more sustainable, through the creation of a new utility company. Even though it is not a big commercial player like Essent or Liander, the designers still have to use the “commercial language” to market it successfully. Speaking the commercial language while using public money, this is why, according to Matthijs, the project is special. “We find it very interesting to be involved in this way as an agency”. These are the moments that the studio’s method of offering a mirror for critical self-reflection really shine. Where they hold the discretion to challenge the client’s alleged (visual) identity. To ask questions shush as why, how, and when. “They are not asking you for any reason. They want a creative agency that looks at them and looks at them from a different perspective”, Matthijs explains. However, “not everyone is waiting for something like that”, Arwen quickly adds, hinting at the tension he mentioned earlier. More often than not, when the studio is working with very commercial clients, they also have to work with the client’s marketing team. They have always gone through everything so incredibly elaborately; who they want to be, what message they want to convey, what values they attach to their products or services “to make a radical change in those assumptions is the most challenging thing for us”, according to Arwen. “We find it difficult to continue the work of another, to continue on what is already there”, the older brother states. “That does not really suit us”. This is different than assignments from the public/social sphere e.g. governments and semi-governments. They include projects where you can create something out of nothing, projects where “you really start from scratch”. These are usually relatively large branding projects and projects that we, as a studio, are often asked for, as Arwen explains. “And that is what we like the most, to peak and then to continue”.

On the question, if they ever involve third parties in their process and in that sense, employ the participatory design methods that are deemed essential to the concept of socially responsible design according to Thomas Markussen, the answer from the brothers
is clear: no. Matthijs elaborates: “Some people can design and some people cannot [...] you do want to have those roles clear, one is the client and the other the contractor”, “Stick to what you know”. However, that does not mean there is no interaction at all. On the contrary, the designers describe their relationship with their client as very intensive. Most of all because it is an important source of input and information. However, the client is never involved “in a design process, in the sense that it becomes a co-creation”. Arwen describes the design process and the role of the client as follows: “In the first instance, you collect the ingredients, then we shape it and then we will combine the form with content together with the client”. It becomes clear that the client is indeed still very essential for the studio; “you still need the client in this, to create a kind of extra deepening”. And if the communication and relationship between the client and the contractor are good, “yes, then you get the most out of the design, and then the design just gets better,” according to Arwen. The brothers are also not open for co-design in its traditional form, “that does not make much sense”. Or as Matthijs tells: “I cannot say to the client: “go help designing”. That does not work”. Nonetheless, the designers do see a co-creation on another level, far and foremost between them and other creatives. In a client-based assignment, the studio gathers a team around them with the necessary skills for the job, coding, video, websites etc. This approach is also reflected in their personal initiatives. De Kantine, for instance, was a project that began with a few designer friends, architects, and writers. Even with their own distillation label, the brothers entered a partnership with a distiller and a brewer.

The size of the social impact of the studio’s designs depends heavily on the assignment itself. As an example, Matthijs points to their work for the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam or IABR for short (this project will be examined extensively in the visual analysis). Because the biennale has an international character “it has, of course, a completely different scale level”. Their work for IABR was picked up internationally and was awarded a second place in the European Design Awards 2018. The designers aimed at visually translating the difficult theme of IABR 2018, the interaction between climate change and design, and making it suitable for a diverse audience. The
award was bestowed on the studio mainly because, according to Arwen, they managed to successfully translate such a complex issue in a positive way. The designers recognise that the project also enabled a form of co-creation: “But not with designing, but more with content”. The brothers worked intensively with the three curators and the director of the biennale. “That has led to what you see now that it really is so sharp and ...” “... so substantively accurate”, the designers say while completing each other. Both see their work for IABR as an excellent example of where the social and the commercial meet. Despite it being a commercial assignment, “it was also about the change we all need to make to save the world as it were”. The designers put an emphasis on questions such as which materials are we going to use? Are they sustainable? And can we reuse them in any another way? And these questions paid off as Arwen describes; “bags have been made of banners and flags”, and the wooden beams have also “found their own way”. Matthijs adds that they even chose a more sustainable paper, because “the whole project was centred around it and it would be very strange if you choose materials that are not sustainable”.

Both Arwen and Matthijs believe that the creative industries, through institutions such as Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, already does a lot to challenge and stimulate designers to be more socially engaged, in the form of open calls for example. These initiatives give graphic designers, 3-d artists or architects, the space to work on socially engaging questions. As an example, Arwen points to the elderly care and the problems associated with it. Dementia, for instance, has been a focus of graphic designers over the years. Initiatives like Dementielab, housed in Belgium and partly funded by the government, provides compelling solutions for the elderly with dementia. Most notably, Dementielab claims to create solutions that are conceived with the very people who will use them. They thus provide new methods and approaches to deal with dementia on the basis of participatory design methods. Arwen tells that these problems also have a place in The Netherlands. Questions such as “how do you deal with it in special care homes” are increasingly found among designers from all disciplines. Although Matthijs explains that they do not feel compelled to react on the open calls put out by an institution such as
the Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, for they mainly are aimed at the real ‘social design’ focused designers. Nonetheless, he does admit that it raises questions that any designer should pose. Designing with materiality and sustainability in mind becomes even more essential in the design practice, according to Matthijs. Issues such as “where does it come from” and “what materials do you choose” or “how is it produced”, seem to be leading a number of projects, as can be seen from the IABR studio project.

In short, both designers do seem to carry a sense of social responsibility as becomes clear from their own initiatives and commercial projects. However, the amount of responsibility they can carry differs to a great extent from project to project. Less commercial assignments, including public money, for example, offer a greater deal of designer discretion which enables the designers to ‘steer the ship’. In more commercial assignments, marketing teams already seem to have determined how particular brands aim to express themself, resulting in less control for the designer. In that sense, social responsibility seems somewhat fluid and flexible; it comes and goes in different amounts. Social responsibility, therefore, becomes reactive as Studio De Ronners responds when an opportunity arises. This does not mean that the studio is complete without control; it is still them that accept the projects. Although, jobs are not quick to be turned down, in many cases this is not even necessary as the client base they have been building over the years has led them to a sphere of similar clients with similar problems. They may not regard themselves as social designers, but their clients have guided them in that very direction. Projects such as IABR made them think about materiality and sustainability, WarmteStad made the studio engage with the public realm through public money, and their own initiatives form’s a playground for horizon extending social projects. It is why Studio De Ronners is an interesting case study. The studio is exemplary of how a traditional design practises with conventional methods is able to engage with the social sphere. The term ‘conventional’ is in its place here. Mainly because the studio does not seem to work with any of the novel participatory design or co-design methods. The expression “stick to what you know” is all-telling. Nonetheless, the designers see an increasing emphasis on social questions, far and foremost because of the open calls put out by the Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie.
2.2 Case study: Visual Analysis Studio De Ronners

Their answer was quick and decisive: The International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, this is a project that would suit a visual analysis according to the brothers Ronner. An assignment where social and commercial issues were brought together in a single project, where concerns about sustainability and durability were raised, and where both designers could provide potential solutions through design. The outcome of that project, several design expressions on different materials and displayed in various locations throughout the region of Rotterdam and Brussels, found international recognition. Themed as *The Missing Link*, the project for the IABR received the silver Ico-D Excellence award in the category ‘branding’ issued by the International Council of Design. Additionally, they won silver for their card and flyer designs and bronze for their designed signs and displays. It is sufficient to say that the project was a success. Nonetheless, how does the project translate the complex social issues raised by the IABR so well, according to many? And what does it tell us about the way in which social responsibility was acted out by Studio De Ronner, especially in a commercial context?

The International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, or IABR for short, is a knowledge institute as well as a cultural platform. Founded in 2001, the organisation aims at generating real-world change, through the potential of imagination and design. The organisation is rooted in the idea that architecture, and especially urban planning, are of great social importance. Under the guidance of director George Brugmans, the platform has a particular interest in the city in the context of climate change and increasing social inequality (IABR). They aim to achieve these goals through several methods:

- Bringing together essential disciplines and international sectors to conduct design research.
- Adding value to policymaking and decision making and simultaneously by influencing the social agenda.
- Providing a spotlight for knowledge once every two years.
Actively contributing to the realization of this knowledge (IABR).

These challenging methods manifest themselves in two ways. First, through ‘IABR–Ateliers’ which are long-term research design projects in collaboration with governments and other stakeholders. Second, through the means of an international biennale aimed to “bridge the gap between research and action, between imagination and realization” (IABR). In order to make the IABR’s grand agenda more tangible, the platform operates with themes as proposed by the team of curators. The curators are tasked to present concrete plans for exhibitions and oversee the public program of the biennale. The general theme for the biennale 2018 and 2020 concerned itself primarily with the question of sustainable development and the climate goals set out by the Paris Climate Agreement. “The question is no longer whether we need to, but how we are going to adjust” (IABR 2018), according to the curators. The title of the two editions, The Missing Link - Our Future in the Delta, the Delta of the Future, intends to convey that nobody really knows how to facilitate the much-needed behavioural change. With this theme in mind, the curator’s challenge designers and policymakers to think about “how can we get from agendas, knowledge, and plans to truly effective spatial transformation” (IABR 2018). However, the biennale editions of 2018 and 2020 do not set out to simply echo a message of awareness. As the curators elaborate in their joint statement: “citizens are not seen as commissioners of design processes and visitors are not seen as buyers of tickets. The goal is to involve various actors as participants in a process of overall adaptation” (Alkemade et al.).

It becomes clear that the assignment that was put before Studio De Ronners is complex, to say the least. Nonetheless, the designers managed to summaries the scope of the project as follows: to translate the IABR’s main goal into a broadly applicable campaign suitable for a diverse audience. Thereby focussing on designers, urban planners, and politicians, but also appeal to a broader audience (European Design Awards). For inspiration, Arwen and Matthijs looked at other successful design campaigns that aimed to bring about social change. Their eyes fell on the Smiling Sun badge (see fig. 3) as the main symbol of the anti-nuclear movement that was active around the late 1970s and
the early 1980s. Created by the Danish activist/designer Anne Lund, the logo meant to indicate a kind, but firm ‘no thanks’. “No clenched fists, no scary images” (Boddington), as Lund explains in an interview with online design magazine *It's Nice That* in 2018. This form of ‘radical optimism’ formed the bases and starting point of Studio De Ronner’s approach to the intricate questions posed by the IABR. Their visual answer is embodied in “radical imagery”, according to the brothers. Conflicting colours and typography and bright/optimistic choice of colour as an invitation to “accept and embrace the Biennale’s message” (Studio De Ronners).

The overarching identity of the biennale is expressed throughout various mediums, including a website, flyers, posters, book(let)s and banners. Most notably, the identity is continued in the many expositions at the biennale itself. It becomes apparent that there are numerous reoccurring design elements.

The title *Our Future in the Delta, the Delta of the Future*, for example, seems to function as the main logo of the campaign. Set in a san’s serif font, this logo is all texted based. Other essential information such as the name of the IABR and the title *The Missing Link* is also texted based and only differs in typeface and boldness as can be seen in figure 4. The text-based logos are often accompanied by a coloured plane and can only be defined as ‘a shape’. These planes and shapes all share the same feature; they have a cut-out and are partly overlayed on top of the text-based logos. Some of these shapes have hard and rugged edges, others are smooth and simplistic as can be seen in figure 5. The various forms also give colour to the campaign. Blue, red, green, and yellow seems to be the primary colours of use (see...
fig. 5). However, the colour pattern can be expanded upon if necessary. For instance, several posters are carrying the colours grey and black, but also purple makes its way into the design of one of the sections of the biennale. The coloured planes further function as a bridge between print and the digital. The shapes on the website and in the Gif’s that are posted on social media are animated and partially interactive. On the website, for instance, the shapes change form - responding to the cursor movements of the visitor, thereby revealing the underlying webpages. This trend is continued on other digital mediums. Digital billboards, for example, contain videos where the animated forms highlight different sections of text.

The studio, together with the artist Martijn van Bachum, have taken the interactiveness of their campaign even a step further with a promotional digital installation. Similar to the website, the forms projected on the floor respond to human input. However, this time it is not a cursor but the human itself rearranging the shapes and lines (see fig. 6). Nevertheless, static, printed imagery is still very prominent throughout the campaign. The flags, bags, and informational stands attest to the emphasis on typographical consistency. The font used for the primary logo reappears as headlines and main body text. It is significant to detail here
that whenever this font-face is employed, it always appears in small caps see, for example, the text-based logo in figure 4 and an informational map in figure 7. At last, the campaigns eye for detail is hard to miss. Thumtacks are matched to the colours of the campaign, and the cut-outs of the coloured planes are re-applied to various booklets and maps (see fig. 8).

The campaign also holds several representational and symbolic meanings. Although not explicit, the cut-out of the coloured planes seems to represent silhouettes of coastlines and cities. This is a subtle connection with the title of the biennale: ‘Our Future in the Delta, the Delta of the Future’.

The Netherlands is considered to be to a great extent a delta region, resulting in distinctive scenic features. The many rivers that flow through The Netherlands, for example, create rugged and unpredictable lines in the Dutch landscape as can be seen in figure 9. The blue and red panels in figure 5 seem to represent these sturdy lines. Other shapes are more smooth and create a compelling link to the North Sea and the beaches that border them. What remains are shapes that have simplistic, cubic arrangements. It is probable to assume that these represent human-made structures such as houses or offices. However, the colour of these different shapes seems disconnected from their representational meaning. In some configurations, the
same patterns are given the same colour. The symbolic meaning of the colours, therefore, must lay somewhere else. However, other than their conflicting nature, it feels to come down to confusing randomness. The shapes and colours have difficulty to come together in a cohesive, larger whole. This tendency is perhaps at the core of the IABR biennale. Many different people from different environments trying to come together to solve a complex puzzle but not knowing how to adjust to each other and the world around it.

The compositional structure of the many graphic expressions likewise exposes intriguing meanings. Often do the coloured planes consume the vaster part of the visual representation, and in some cases even overlap with the textual information. Therefore, the titles and text feel cramped and are almost overflooded by the shapes. It incentivises a feeling of emerging danger; if we do not do something now, it will be too late. This
sense of pending doom is concealed by the bright and uplifting colours and does remind
of Anne Lund’s *Smiling Sun* badge. However, the radical optimism conveyed in the badge
is not directly prominent in the IABR campaign. Where Lund’s design shows that we
can work together and that it is possible to turn a negative into a positive, Studio De
Ronners designs do not leave this imaginary space open. There is no text, illustration, or
picture in the colourful shapes; the sea is coming, and you better be prepared - a dooming
message carefully wrapped in a vivid design. Another compositional detail is the fact
that there seems to be no hierarchy in the shapes that represent the sea, the coastline,
or the human-structures. The shapes are always placed next, and in some cases even
on top, of each other (see fig. 4 & 5). It is an artful visual translation of the interaction
in the title: our future is indeed *in* the delta and the delta, therefore, is our future.

If one is to critically analyse the interactive meaning of the campaign, it becomes
clear that the connotations in the digital sphere slightly differ from what is presented
in print. On the digital mediums, the website, and posts on social media, for instance,
the viewer is given a sense of control. By the viewers own input, it becomes possible
to redirect the form of the coloured figures, thereby exposing essential information that
invites further action. The sense of emerging danger becomes somewhat less pressing now
the design provides the means to literally push back that what is feared. On the printed
medium’s this ‘anxiety’ seems to become more accentuated as becomes apparent from the
size and multiplicity at which the biennale is advertised. Figures 10 and 11 are a testament
to this inclination. The building-sided banners, large flags and the plethora of posters
might be very overwhelming. However, this does not have to be an inadequate design/
marketing decision for it does speak truth to the assignment as laid out by the curators. The
problems that the biennale attempts to address are complex, multifaced and overwhelming.
Furthermore, the placement and materiality of the biennales advertising campaign are worth addressing. In particular, the promotional artistic installation placed at the central train station of Rotterdam, the post on social media, and the posters in public spaces, do make an attempt to connect with a broad audience. However, the designs do not deliver a distinction in the audience they are addressing. The images are more or less the same throughout the advertising campaign. One can, therefore, safely assume that the advertising material is predominantly, and perhaps only, aimed at people who do not have
a deep understanding of urban planning. The materials used for the promotional products do not seem to differ to a great extent to what one could expect from a regular campaign. In the interview, Arwen and Matthijs pointed out that the materials were carefully selected for being more sustainable and the organisation went so far as to recycle the flags into bags. However, there is no indicator of this information on its surface since it is not translated directly into the designs. Furthermore, the material of the various carriers of the printed advertisement campaign gives the designs texture as can be seen in figure 12. Deliberately or not, it creates a relationship with the representational meaning of the coloured shapes. The surface of the green shape on the printed bag, for example, highlights the idea of ‘land’. Other surfaces contrast the representational meaning of the shapes. The shape on the yellow poster, wrinkled by the advertisements that went before it, for instance, should represent a continuous beach or perhaps calm waters. However, its wrinkled texture does not confirm that notion. Instead, it generates a merging of ‘fabric’ and ‘sea’, a complex interaction that adds another layer which goes along well with the overarching ideas of the biennale.

Fig. 12. Various textures throughout the printed campaign by Studio De Ronners. Studio De Ronners, 2018, www.deronners.nl/en/cases/internationaal-architectuur-biennale-rotterdam/. 
In short, it becomes clear that the campaign designed by Studio De Ronners have put a lot of effort into visually translating the dynamic title *Our Future in the Delta, the Delta of the Future* and the multifaced issues that are associated with it. The various coloured shapes and planes aim to capture the distinct landscapes of the Dutch delta and simultaneously serves as a stark reminder of what is about to come if we don’t act *now*. Labelling the campaign as radical optimism is, therefore, not entirely on its place. Indeed, the bright and vivid colours do hint at happiness, but by cramping the text-based logo’s in a corner, sometimes partly overlayed with the coloured planes, it quickly incentivises a feeling of emerging danger. Nevertheless, the designers did manage to create an interactive and approachable campaign. In the digital sphere, where visitors are given a sense of control, for instance, the campaign actively engages with potential visitors. But also, the more traditional methods of advertising do still have a prominent place in the campaign. They, intentionally or not, add new layers to the complicated and overwhelming theme of the biennale trough texture and multiplicity. In general, the promotional materials seem to be designed primarily for the ‘the common people’. This becomes clear from the locations at which the advertisements are displayed (in print and online), and the lack of diffraction in information between the expert and the layman.

To conclude, this assignment reveals several ways in which graphic designers engage with the notion of social responsibility in a commercial, client-based setting. Their ability to do so is in large part dictated by the already socially engaging angle of the studio’s client. Nonetheless, it becomes evident that the designers maximised their opportunity by being actively involved in the themes of the biennale and its visual articulation. The brothers went further than the conventional advertising methods of flyers and posters and collaborated with artist Martijn van Bachum to create an interactive, promotional installation. It speaks of discretion and insightful creativity that designers brought into the process. Furthermore, from the visual analysis, it becomes apparent that the representational, interactive, and compositional meanings of the campaign, stay more or less in-line with the mission initially set-out by the platform. The designers simply
had not enough discretion to deviate, or they might not feel it needed changing.

2.3 Case study: Interview Studio Boot

With slight hesitation, I dropped the door knocker on the unusual big gate. There are not many houses or buildings with the same kind of entrance in Den Bosch. Was this the correct address? My interaction with the door was answered quickly with a squeaking and creaking sound. The large door opened up and before me stood Petra Jansen. She enthusiastically invited me in and offered me a cup of coffee. While taking place at a table, greeted by the happy barking of the office dog, I took a moment to absorb my surrounding. I had found myself in the workshop of Studio Boot and simultaneously, in the house of Petra Jansen and Edwin Vollebergh. Living and working overlap in a space filled with books, second hand furniture, and various design accessories. These design tools are not irrelevant as Petra and her husband breathe graphic design. Since graduating from the AKV in the ‘90s, Petra has set out to become an established designer in the South of the Netherlands. Far and foremost through their design company, Studio Boot, but also through projects such as Social Label and Werkwarenhuis. Her clients stretch from international companies such as Nike, to the bakery around the corner, and a less conventional target audience; low-skilled or low-IQ people. This last focus era is the basis of her self-initiated foundation Social Label. The mission of the foundation is, according to the website, to build an appealing [working] environment and create new opportunities for vulnerable groups. “We work through Design and in collaboration with designers and workshops, on creating a new meaningful perspective on work, participation, and community building” (Social Label). The initiatives’ creative practises in which they attempt to achieve these goals are elaborate. Together with a team of textile designers, graphic designers, product designers, and marginalized social groups, Social Labels creates a range of products from ceramic tableware to chandeliers and trendy sweaters. Additionally, Petra has been extensively involved in the Werkwarenhuis initiative, a project that has successfully developed an industrial region into a cultural and creative hotspot for designers, creative
entrepreneurs, education and marginalized social groups (Werkwarenhuis). Located in a former cattle feed plant, the area offers space not only for the Social Label but also for restaurants, studios and clubs. All this work has amounted to an exceptional perspective on social responsibility in commercial design, its politics, its economy, and its ideal future.

Because, according to Petra, this is what socially responsible design is all about, politics, economy, and Zeitgeist. “You need to be aware of the world around you”, Petra states. It means that one knows the timing of the world in which they live - “politically and economically, you should pay attention”. Thereby she believes that thinking about the Social is an intrinsic quality of a socially responsible designer. She, therefore, also feels not called upon by the calls of the various Dutch design institutes. Such designers should already be intrinsically motivated, she explains. Moreover, social solutions do not come through thinking in concepts but by providing good communications. “Everything in life is part of communication - if you do not communicate properly, you can not solve anything”. This is why graphic design equals communication, Petra states. It has a poetic side, a stylistic side, a narrative side, but far and foremost, also a social side, because design has always been communicating messages in public spaces for large audiences. They, therefore, are storytellers and often find themselves as central figures in large networks. “Graphic designers are simply people who naturally connect, listen, reflect and attempt to spread a message to a broad group of people”. For me, social means humane, Petra ascertains; “it is really about the human”. That is why social projects are challenging, she continues. You have to think long-term; you have to have a lot of passion, you have to be able to interact with people, you have to be able to make communities. Being socially responsible does not mean finding ICT solutions, according to Petra. The humanitarian side is far more essential. “Because how many people on the sidelines can’t read, can’t feel, can’t see?” This is where graphic designers fulfil a crucial role. They can make something visual in such a way that particular messages suddenly do become readable, in ways nobody would expect, Petra explains. We, therefore, can not regard graphic designers solely as ‘value-adders’, a term proposed by Melles, et al. to describe a practise
whereby a products’ commercial value is maximized through cosmetic styling. “That is so derogatory”, especially since graphic designers are the central figures of society, according to Petra. However, she does acknowledge that in practice, the world is different. It is built on a system of titles, money, and prestige, she elaborates. Even the design world knows a hierarchy. First, architects, then product designers and then, somewhere around the bottom, you have the photographers and the graphic designers. It is ruled by those who build the most comprehensive things, who works with the most millions; “everything is dedicated to the economy”, the designer states. In that sense, illustrators are even worse off, according to Petra: “For a mere seventy euros, they have to make illustrations of the most abstract questions”. For Petra, it is clear: the entire creative industry is related to the euro, and the people who shout the loudest get the most amount of money. “However, it does not make you the happiest”, the designer firmly states. It is about making beautiful things, things that make you happy as a designer- and that is called ‘being authentic’.

This approach is a common thread throughout Petra’s practise and her engagement with the commercial field. “We do not feel the need to become a very large industry factory”, she explains. They do exist, the large commercial companies, employing tactics like ‘push-marketing’ which is entirely centred around sales and sales alone. “Bullshit, of course - because you can also sell things nicely [...] to sell graphic design”. One, therefore, needs to be aware of which customer one is to work with, Petra tells. Studio Boot, for example, has a strong social vision which is given shape through numerous projects. Nevertheless, a client can also have all kinds of ideas. The answer to the question of what happens if a marketing team’s ideas of a project differ from that of Studio Boot, therefore, seems logical. “Discussion”, Petra answers, or a fight. She elaborates: “look, we will never deliver something on-demand. However, Petra goes even a step further; “I hate, I hate marketers - terrible!” She continues: “how the hell can you build a brand if you do not have a vision and you do not believe in yourself? How the hell can you build a brand if you let the public be in charge? Then it is just about making money”. This is where Petra’s ideas on the graphic designer and her experiences in the commercial field come together.
“People think that graphic designers are only a service”, she states. “That is not true at all, a graphic designer has a vision, has a style, has an opinion, and is of service to the process, but not to the execution”, according to the designer. “Because you should not let yourself be used”. Already early on in the history of her career, Petra employed a strategy to combat this. Because in her daily practice, she does not very often have to deal with a “compromise”. “We are honest”, she explains. “We tell people in forehand that we don’t really like marketing, then you should not be with us”. Petra agrees with the suggestion if this is part of dynamic profiling of Studio Boot. “You have to profile yourself as a designer, otherwise, you will get the wrong assignments”. The designer continues to describe that if one is only to perform desktop publishing jobs, it becomes challenging to do something else. Petra also does not see this position as romantic or naive. “It is not romantic, not at all. It is hard work”. What is most essential in this, according to Petra, is that a designer has a passion and lives for his craft. “Working is a hobby”, she states. Nevertheless, Petra admits that they “probably intuitively, unknowingly, just made turns when we wanted to do things” and thereby “also said no to some customers” - a strategy that seems inline with Victor Papanek’s proposed work ethic. This approach has worked for Petra and Studio Boot as she explains that in twenty-seven years, they never went without work even without acquisition. Overall, Petra seems to aim for a healthy balance in the commercial segment of her work. She explains that one should never foolishly state that they will never work for commercial clients; “We have worked a lot in commerce”, however, “you must, of course, be allowed to and be able to develop an autonomous visual language”.

It becomes clear that Petra, together with her husband Edwin, have a strong moral vision when it comes to their own studio. Nevertheless, their initiatives like Social Label and Werkwarenhuis seems to indicate that their work within the confines of their studio does not fulfil their needs for social engagement. According to Petra, the initiatives are targeted at area development and at providing a creative community for those in need. In particular, Social Label originated from an actual demand from society, something Petra holds in high regard: “if there is no need, or you have to investigate and find the
need, then it makes no sense at all”. Petra calls this form of value creation “design with a meaning”. Far and foremost because projects like Social Label presume that “the designer is purely employed in the humanity of the maker”, meaning that a designer has the skills to think about what the other person needs - and tailors it to that needs. “Design with a meaning” is also reflected in the Werkwarenhuis initiative. The creative hotspot, located in an old animal food factory, is a haven for creative spirits, a venue for advocacy and a stage where young people can experience artistic expression. This freedom is essential, according to Petra. “For us, freedom is more important than money”, she states. This is perhaps a reason why these projects are self-initiated because, as Petra explains, the value of these initiatives is commonly unable to be expressed in terms of money. “Everyone is looking for a type of thermometer that can be put alongside it, but that is seldom the case. That is very difficult”. Petra, therefore, sees the Creative Industries as a useful interim solution, because there “the language of money can hopefully symbolize the other [artistic] value”. One can see an example of this notion in the location of Werkwarenhuis and social label. In the book Social Label Works: An Open Book On Designing Labour Petra describes that the former animal feed factory is to be classified as “cultural heritage” and sees it as a “gesamtkunstwerk” - “a monument for the future with respect for the buildings of yesterday and a new function for tomorrow” (Janssen and Kramer 188). Nevertheless, when asked about the possible gentrification projects like Werkwarenhuis can bring about, Petra replies swiftly: “you cannot fight a giant. So, we’re doing a lot of things, and you can only denounce it, put it on the agenda, however, generating or making that freedom or making that field is more important”.

Petra’s humanistic approach also influences her perspective on design methods such as co-design or participatory design. “That is of course also bullshit”, she answers to the question if these methods are part and parcel with the notion of social design. “It can never be a method or a system because they are human contacts”. Petra is convinced of the idea that designers are mentors, whereby one always needs to be “art director in charge” of the product. “Otherwise it can never be something of high quality”, she states. Another
issue that Petra has with these design methods is that they are often short-lived, something that she sees reflected in things such as community art; “they make something, and then they hang it up for one day - and then it is gone”. Instead, it is about social sustainability, “that if you put something in it that it stays there”, according to Petra. She then also does not see herself as a mediator nor facilitator. “No, I see myself as a designer, I see myself as a designer in showing how these things are conceivable”. In the past, people have assumed that Petra’s role, through projects such as Social Label, is that of the connector - bringing people together in inspiring ways. “No! No, I am a designer”, is the firm reply she gives these people. “That is my role”, “that is my profession” - visually formulating humanistic communications by being an editor, a photographer, and most of all: a graphic designer.

With all the experience Petra has gathered through the years the question of what should change to improve the position of the socially responsible designer is not too difficult to answer: “just much more awareness among the general public”. The government has an essential part to play in that process according to her. “Governments just have to take designers seriously, as a real field”, she explains. “The creative industry is a professional group of people who simply practice their profession seriously, they are not ‘artists’”. Petra seems to hint at the fact that designers are often portrayed as artists in governmental policies. Instead, design is “art applied in society”, according to her. “That is what designers are: applied artists”. Furthermore, she indicates that designers at large do hold social responsibilities, but they should continue to study the problems at hand, especially now that the world around us is environmentally deteriorating. They should focus on what is at play when it comes to politics, but also economically, and socially. In her advice, she encapsulates a firm warning: “You must be aware of what is going on in society and not be aware of what your colleagues are doing”. One should not solely follow trends. As a designer, one must “dare to be at the centre of society, to see the larger picture. Otherwise, you just can not take the right turns”, Petra states.
Throughout the interview, it has become apparent that through design, Petra can engage with the social sphere to a great extent. Far and foremost, because of her involvement with self-initiated projects such as Social Label and the Werkwarenhuis. These projects enable Petra to operate in a different value system; that of humanitarian and creative freedom. Nevertheless, money and the commercial field do not pose an issue, as with the graphic design studio she has taken upon many commercial assignments. From Nike to Coca-Cola, what matters to Petra is that one is still able to develop an autonomous visual language. Key in that process is that one should not be exploited because designers are often regarded as a service. Instead, the designer is of service to the process, but not to the execution. To combat this, and the sometimes-conflicting ideas from marketing departments, Petra clearly communicates to her clients what they can expect. Petra agrees with the suggestion that it is part of the profile of Studio Boot. She admits that already early on in her career, she intuitively and perhaps unknowingly, made choices that influenced the direction of the studio. Most interestingly, these choices also include that Petra also said no to some clients. This results in the fact that the studio only occasionally has to come to a visual ‘compromise’. Nevertheless, participatory and co-design methods are seldom used in her commercial practice and self-initiated projects. Mainly because Petra states that the unpredictability of human nature is hard to grasp within these predetermined, fixed systems and methods - it just does not work. Moreover, Petra finds the term ‘value adders’ for graphic designers derogatory. Graphic designers are more than that. They are storytellers and often find themselves as central figures in large networks. People who naturally connect, listen, reflect, and attempted to spread a message to a broad audience, they apply ‘art’ to society, according to Petra. We should, therefore, take the field and the profession seriously, this is where there is still room for improvement. At last, graphic designers should not stop studying the complex issues at hand, they should dare to be at the centre of society.
2.4 Case study: Visual Analysis Studio Boot

No conventional visual product fits the graphic designer better than the poster. This premise is unquestionably the case with Petra Janssen and Edwin Vollebergh’s Studio Boot. One only has to take a glance at the studio’s portfolio to find out that the poster is an essential ingredient in the duo’s visual language. This visual analysis, therefore, will take a closer look at several poster designs that Studio Boot has been producing over the years. In particular, the inquiry will take a closer look at the posters for *Rewrite Your Future*, a recent crowd-funded project initiated by four design studios. The project gave rise to the Nieuwe Bossche School movement, aimed at making Den Bosch “even more beautiful, fun and relevant” (NBS). The project attempts to realise this by creating a two-month street exposition throughout the city of Den Bosch. At the same time, the analysis will include several advertisements for the Leids Cabaret Festival, a commercial client that since 2003 has provided the studio with ample opportunity to develop a distinct graphical poster style. That style has certainly not gone unnoticed. In 2016, the annual French festival La Fête du Graphisme invited the studio to exhibit their designs at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. The show is in addition to their exposition in 2014, where the studio already showed posters for the Leids Cabaret Festival at the Cité de la Mode et du Design (Studio Boot). The visual analysis is, far and foremost, driven by the question of how Studio Boot engages with the social in these two similar poster campaigns. Where *Rewrite Your Future* arose from a self-initiated social project, the posters for the Leids Cabaret Festival can be classified as a conventional commissioned assignment. How does Studio Boot navigate between these two modes of commission? Do the symbolic meanings in the visual translation of the assignments change depending on the commissioner? And what can be said about style?

The street exposition *Rewrite Your Future* is a design project initiated by Ine Rutgers on the crow-funding platform *Voor De Kunst*. The initiative is the first group exhibition of the collective the Nieuwe Bossche School and is at the invitation of the
Graphic Studio in Den Bosch. The Nieuwe Bossche School brought four prominent Dutch design studios together in a quest to “keep the poster [as a medium] alive and kicking” (VDK). The collective, amongst them Studio Boot, wants to highlight that a poster is a platform for applied art, according to their website. “Posters are often subordinate to commercial messages, the collective shows that a poster can be beautiful, engaging and endure” (NBS). Although the four studios have different graphic styles, they are brought together by a coincidental passion for confronting visual language. Rutgers calls this visual language “humorous with underlying statements” (VDK). The first open-air exhibition of the collective is an attempt to address freedom, space, and optimism. This approach is explained in the mission statement of the small design group, which states that they attempt to make the city of Den Bosch “even more beautiful, fun and relevant” (NBS). The posters thus contain a slightly activist edge, according to the designers. As Peter Korsman from the design studio Autograph explains: “the street has become […] the domain of advertising and corporate communications. While it is public space! This project tries to bring in more beauty and content” (Vos). The activist content finds its shape as political commentary as is embodied in the poster Beauty Is Not A Crime by Studio Boot. The poster is a “gentle response to upcoming culture cuts” moulted in a design that is “soft and a little cute but in screaming colours” (Vos), according to the studio. Nevertheless, the open-air form of the exposition was not part of the initial plan but is an alternative method in reaction on the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown. “The corona measures made a traditional exhibition difficult” (Vos), Edwin explains in an interview with online magazine Mestmag.nl. An online brainstorm session resulted in an exhibition where the city becomes a stage - where Den Bosch as a whole is seen as an audience (Vos). The poster’s accessibility, therefore, becomes essential.

The setting that gave rise to the posters for the Leids Cabaret Festival differs to a considerable extent from that of the Rewrite Your Future exposition. Instead of a self-initiated collective project with seemingly endless creative freedom, the festival is organised by Bunker Theaterzaken and funded by BNNVARA, a public broadcasting
network in the Netherlands. The festival has been part of the Dutch theater landscaped for the past forty years. Studio Boot was assigned to create a visual identity, under the guidance of numerous posters, for several festival editions. At its core, the festival is a juried competition where performers have a chance to win a money prize and, of course, media attention. Many candidates have attempted to win over the jury consisting of successful comedians and theatre makers, in order to win the prestigious award. Most Dutch comedians have built their careers in this way, according to an article in the Dutch newspaper NRC. “They have become known for being in the final of a major festival” (Kragtwijk). Nevertheless, the festival does have a socially critical edge. This is evident from the performances of the candidates, which often “do not shy away from a solid game of self-reflection and suffer from varying degrees of uncertainty and confusion” (Van Teylingen). However, not only their contestants can be provocative. The festival itself also has become known for making statements. For example, in 2018, the jury chose to award Farbod Moghaddam, a thirty-year-old Iranian who still lacked some stage experience. In his performance, Moghaddam describes how he fled from Iran to the Netherlands at the age of five. Moghaddam unquestionably impressed the jury as they reported that “no one but he can tell us this story” (Henquet).

From the Rewrite Your Future exposition two posters are of interest, the green announcement poster and the poster entitled: Love Is All Around (see figure 13 and 14). The announcement poster has a fluorescent green background and features several illustrations. All the illustrations are black, and almost all of them are drawn with thick outlines. The poster also features the logos of the Nieuwe Bosche School, the city of Den Bosch, and the logos of all the four studios in the collective. Textual information is kept to a minimum. The poster only contains a reference to the mission statement of the collective and a link to the website. In that regard, the sign Love Is All Around does not differ to a great extent. Although text is integrated into the illustration of the poster, information is still sparse. The poster has, however, a more diverse colour pallet. The pink, brown and red colours form a sharp contrast to the primarily white background. The main design of the poster
consists of simple geometric shapes that feature different styles of letters and illustrations, for example, a large X or two boxing man surrounded by hearts. One rectangle also holds a calligraphic script which reads: To the Moon and Back. At last, the poster contains the logo from Studio Boot and The Nieuwe Bosche School. Both signs are offset prints on a 50×70 cm format. The invitation poster from 2003 (see fig. 15) for the Leids Cabaret Festival is principally in the same colour pallet of Love Is All Around. The red and pink background prevail, but this time the sign is introduced to the colour yellow and blue. The main illustration features once again an outlined figure. However, the lines of the illustrated woman are not clean and well-defined but display drips and speckles. The main image is partly overlaid by a yellow star-shaped element. The element contains a textual call-to-action in addition to the information that is present in a black san’s serif font at the bottom of the banner. The poster carries the logo of the festival, Studio Boot, and several sponsors. In comparison, the more recent invitation poster from 2019 (see fig. 16) holds many more illustrations. Once again, the drawings are outlined and lack any fill colour. The small designs represent women performing various sports actions. The central figure, a scantily dressed woman on her knees with an emoji-like head, is also covered in illustrations. A
red banner with the text: No Pain No Gain, is overlapping the kneeling woman’s feet. The poster does once more feature a yellow star-shaped call-to-action element and textual information in a san’s serif font at the bottom. The whole picture comes together on a blue vignetted and grained background. Both posters are on an 83 by 118 cm format.

Since the designs in the *Rewrite Your Future* street-exposition are deemed to be ‘slightly atavistic’ the posters should hold several representational meanings. The green announcement poster seems to hint the most in this direction. Mainly because of the various black-outlined illustrations which, due to their graphic style, are closely linked to icon designs that have flooded the digital sphere in the last decade. See, for example, a commonly applied Wi-fi icon and the Wi-Fi icon with the skull in the announcement poster (see fig. 17) which are almost the same in style. Most interestingly, the symbol is not only a skull but a representation of death itself, with Wi-Fi stripes becoming the blade of a sickle. Because icons are commonly understood as illustrations that can communicate a universal message without prior knowledge, the reading of this icon becomes simple: Wi-Fi kills. Although more illustrations have straight-forward readings (pizza slice, flag, milk carton etc.), the poster plays with the notion of the symbol as
well. The central figure on the sign, for example, is represented as a holy figure as becomes apparent from the woman’s clothing and the halo around the image’s head. The symbolised idea of holiness is disturbed, however, with the introduction of the symbols of sin and joy. The woman is spending money and drinking alcohol, all the while rollerblading - even her legs become partly visible. As this illustration takes central stage in a compositional sense, the poster indicates a sentiment of rebellion. Most interestingly, the representation of the rebellious, daring woman is seemingly continued in the festival’s invitation poster from 2019 (fig. 16). The poster features a woman on her knees in a seductive position. Her body is covered with logos and illustrations, mimicking a tattooed skin. The cable of the microphone is gracefully tied around her arm, and the lines around the almost-scared expression of her emoji-like face emphasise an exaggerated interpretation of sensuality. However, the combination of the women scarcely clothed position, tattoos, and facial expression does not convey an idea of innocence. Instead, it almost hints at prostitution. This idea is strengthened by the text: No Pain No Gain, in the red banner. The poster, therefore, likewise obtains a serious rebellious undertone.

The poster for the 2003 edition of the Leids Cabaret Festival (fig. 15) could not be more different. This advertisement likewise features one main illustration on a compositional significant place. The image seems stencilled and invites a raw but emotional reading. This effect is far and foremost build on the sincere gaze of the woman and the speckled and grained red letters of the festival’s name. The overall pink colour intensifies this emotion. Due to the stencil technique, the central figure appears to be crying. Her emotional state seems an indirect reference to the classical symbols of comedy and tragedy, the sock and buskin. In essence, the Leids Cabaret Festival is a competition over the exposé of the self and not a play where one is to act a fictional
character. This allows for an affectionate and challenging self-reflection and self/social critique, a tendency that is accurately captured in the poster. Another compositional element that is present on both posters for the festival is the call-to-action ‘star’. It seems to allude to conventional marketing techniques: a contrasting button that invites viewers to connect and engage with a product. The placement of these visuals instantly commercialises the posters, they communicate that something is to be sold. Tickets, experience, and in the case for the festival and its potential participants; fame and a possible career. Nevertheless, because the call-to-action stars in both cases are placed seemingly arbitrary but prominently on the posters, it leads to believe that the stickers were a design afterthought, only to be placed because the client deemed it necessary. In a representational sense, the poster Love Is All Around does not seem to hold a deeper layer of meaning than that what is presented at face value. Cuteness and sweetness are the dominant sentiments that are visually translated. The red heart, the soft pink and brown colours, and the swirly fonts lead to an almost cynical and childish overrepresentation of love. This idea is strengthened by the way the simple geometrical shapes are composed; as a block tower made by a child. At the same time, this particular construction of the notion of love leads to believe that it is to crumble. We have captured the construction in motion - the shapes do not quite touch each other. The rectangles with the hearts are already falling off the round sphere. If the onlooker were to be given a snapshot of the scene in the future, one could see that the installation would tumble. The tower of love has failed, and one would say naively to a child: ‘nice try, better luck next time’. What does it mean in the context of Rewrite Your Future? Perhaps that things should be built by professionals or that cuteness and sweetness can be a facade? Nevertheless, both these questions do not seem in-line with the mission statement set-out by the Nieuwe Bosche School. The poster, therefore, brings more beauty than a political commentary on the status quo.

In conclusion, Studio Boot has managed to create several poster campaigns that, throughout the years, stayed true to the visual language of the designers. Most strikingly are the similarities between the green announcement poster for Rewrite Your
Future from 2020 and the invitation poster for the Leids Cabaret Festival 2019. Both these posters display a rebellious and critical undertone even when they are produced in different contexts. It is to show that Studio Boot is not restricted in their translation of more commercial assignments and does not visually deviate when presented with the artistic freedom in projects such as the street exposition. The discretion of the designers seems to reach so far that the visual translations sometimes surpasses the intention of the assignments. Love Is All Around, for instance, does not really seem to engage with the activist topic at hand other than visually brightening up the city. Moreover, the advertisements for the Leids Cabaret Festival only communicates that something is for sale by the placement of a conventional call-to-action sticker. Its arrangement leads to believe that it is only there because the client deemed it necessary. Furthermore, the posters are creations by Studio Boot and by Studio Boot alone - co-design and participatory design methods did not find its way into the advertisements of both campaigns. All this is a testament to how strong the studio sticks to its own perspectives on a visual and stylistic level as well as in the relationship between the studio and the client.

2.5 Case study: Interview Foundation We Are - Bernhard Lenger

At precisely ten o’clock, I entered the digital Google meeting room. Whilst familiarising myself with the virtual environment, clicking on webcam and mute options, another window opened up. It provided me with a view of a cosy living room. I saw decorations on the wall, several houseplants and, of course, a couch with on it; Bernhard Lenger - who humbly greeted me with a common phrase; “can you hear me?” Bernhard, born and raised in Austria, decided to continue his educational career at the Design Academy in Eindhoven, The Netherlands. In 2016 he graduated with the project: This Is Ecocide, in which he exposed the lack of international laws against the “severe destruction of our ecosystem” (This Is Ecocide). His project quickly gained traction. For example, the Design Academy awarded the designer with the esteemed René Smeets Award. A yearly price presented to graduates who attain a “high degree of professionalism both
in the development of the design process and [in] the final result of the graduation project” (Design Academy Eindhoven). His victory was not a given, however. In an interview with *This is Eindhoven*, Bernhard explains that he had to convince the jury that his project is still within the scope of design (This Is Eindhoven). His engagement with the social sphere continued with *We Are Human Rights*, a project in which several human rights defenders explore how design can contribute to resolving socio-political conflicts by focusing on legislation, human rights, and international relations (Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie). In 2018, Bernhard presented the challenging goals of *We Are Human Rights* at the Dutch Design Week. This undertaking also signalled the first project from Bernhard’s self-initiated collective Foundation We Are. The foundation aims to be a design agency that works together with experts to innovate and to transform social and legal systems (Foundation We Are). More recently, Studio Bernhard Lenger received a grant from the Dutch Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie. Fare and foremost to develop a new design methodology and to position himself further as a designer who collaborates with government agencies and other organizations. But also to further professionalise Foundation We Are and to acquire new skills in preparation for field research (Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie).

From Bernhard’s *curriculum vitae*, it becomes apparent that the notion of the social is firmly interwoven in his design practice. That is not surprising, however, as Bernhard believes that design has always been human. “I think it always has been focused on the usage by the human being. So, therefore, I think all design in itself is socialized”, he states. For Bernhard, social design is about the systems we interact with on a daily basis: “they also have been planned or if you want to call it ‘designed’. They have been made in a specific way so that they help us now to work in practice and society”. Consequently, his design practice does not focus in particular on the *material* aspect of design, but rather on the *immaterial* features of design. Bernhard attempts to develop new tools to support these systems and to provide new ideas or “to question existing strategies for certain systems so that we can improve them”. Nonetheless, does Bernhard still regards himself as being a designer? “I think so actually” he ascertains after a couple of seconds. This
is not the first time Bernhard is faced with this question. Many of his professors had the same line of inquiry. They had asked him if he were aiming to go into politics and why he would still act as a designer. However, he does not see himself as merely advertising ‘solutions’ or making attempts to convince people that change is possible; “I’m more trying to create them so that they function well”. That is the difference, according to Bernhard. As a result, the designer “certainly feel[s] responsible in some sense”, but it proves to be hard to answer the question of why. “I think I also don’t have an answer for myself”, he perceives. Nevertheless, Bernhard saw, throughout the development of his career, the many possibilities of what he could do to help people. This inclination might be rooted in personal experience that Bernhard had while he was in compulsory military service in his home country Austria. Bernhard explains that he served as a paramedic with the Red Cross and helped people who required medical care. “I think that was one moment which gave me personally a lot of input on, like, how I can help other people”, he elaborates. The experience has impacted Bernard’s perspective on design in a significant way. “When I started doing social design, I saw the possibilities of what can be done to help people who live in poverty, help people who just struggle with this system, which works well for most of society, but not for them”, he thoughtfully describes.

Although Bernhard is a social designer par excellence, he does not feel addressed by the calls from Dutch institutions asking for design contributions in the hopes of solving complex social problems. “Because I think it’s the wrong party to call”, he states. In a general sense, Bernhard believes that it is the governments who need to “open up their minds” and acknowledge that there are problems in society. It is their attitude that should be: “let’s solve it”, according to the designer. But on a personal level, “I don’t feel addressed by that”. Far and foremost because Bernhard concentrates primarily on international relations – “what is happening there, what is happening in politics” – and not on what is going on within the creative industries itself. Nevertheless, Bernhard’s collective, Foundation We Are, is very much part of the industry. Initial ideas, for instance, involved the creation of posters as a means to anonymise human rights activist who risked
being killed in some countries. At one point, however, it became clear that the best way forward was to become an organization which represents the kind of designers which we wanted to be, according to Bernhard. To reflect on society with the right questions to see “where can we develop new strategies, where can we implement new things”. It became a playground for eight other designers and, at the same time, a personal experiment.

Over time, the foundation grew to become a true ‘entity’, as Bernhard recalls. A quite flexible collective where, when you join in, one becomes part of “something bigger”. At the same time, this ‘entity’ allows designers to successfully work on social issues where an alone standing designer would fail. Bernhard soon found out that with the legitimacy of his foundation people would treat more equally. In the past, the designer ran into issues where he was perceived to be just “a young designer who has no idea of the world”. Bernhard points to an example with a director of an NGO, who demanded that certain data would be placed on the website of the NGO so it could generate online traffic. However, it “brings me in a conflict of interest because I didn’t make a campaign for their organization”, Bernhard explains. “We couldn’t find out how to work together because the director saw me as not an equal party […] and he didn’t bring enough respect towards me”, he continues. These perspectives changed, however, when Bernhard started to say he was the CEO or chairman of a foundation; “everybody takes you seriously”. This “communication strategy” enabled the foundation to “actually support designers to be seen as the stronger entity”. Bernhard tends to employ the same tactics when it comes to his personal practice. The grant he received from the Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, for instance, allowed him to meet many professionals because it makes him approachable. Bernhard believes that “people are more open if you are somehow selected or special. And when you can use something to lure them in. They also more freely give you information”. The strategies employed by Bernhard seem to address the issues surrounding power structures, as described by Thorpe and Gamman.

The website of the foundation states that it aims to use design to transform social
and legal systems and that the collective attempts to achieve this by working with client-based and self-initiated projects. When asked if Bernhard could elaborate on this dynamic, he highlights that it originates from “the most tricky thing” a social designer has to deal with. Typically, because the problems these designers work on are not “momentarily”. “They are a continuous process which needs to be guided and changed”, according to Bernhard. He elaborates by telling that it is a “system of people who work together who continuously change. And therefore, that process actually needs to be way longer”. Bernhard speaks from experience when he explains that many “beautiful” projects get developed together with organizations, however, the contractor-based relationship is always a hurdle. Because “the contractor-based relationship has a beginning and an end”, the designer points out. “There always needs to be the deliverable of this ‘tool’, which is supposed to solve a societal problem”. However, to think that one design will solve the societal problem is nothing more than an illusion and absolutely naive, according to Bernhard. Far and foremost because societal problems are dynamic and are continually changing over time. Bernhard, therefore, prefers to work in a partnership relation, instead of the conventional contractor-based relationship. Such an approach is intended to stimulate a long-term connection where great ideas are not left to be forgotten. Bernhard is convinced that such a client-based relationship is only to be dismissed when “the project itself starts to live” and “when it gets its own head”. Only then “you as a designer slowly can step out”. However, “that actually has never happened to me so far”, Bernhard admittingly describes. The designer once again points to the usual suspects: “the traditional thinking of client and contractor, this ‘beginning and an end’, the ‘deliverable’ this ‘finishing it’ and also the money aspect.” Money is primarily problematic when it comes to maintaining and updating the solutions in our societal system. “It’s a tricky part”, Bernhard states. “It’s more like, oh, it has to happen once. And then we did something and then it has been solved”, he explains. Bernhard seems to address an issue that has been described by activist and writer Michael Edwards who argues that enterprises often only provide a “quick, cosmetic fix for deeper structural problems” (Markussen 163). Money
is also the main reason that self-initiated projects are still necessary and plentiful. Some projects simply lack a client base, according to Bernhard. This is the moment where one says, “I want to do something about it, but I don’t have a client. I don’t really have the money”. The shortest way then, is to start something for ourselves, Bernhard makes clear.

“Usually I demand it”, is Bernhard’s answer to the question if he has enough influence as a designer in a client-based assignment. This question is most relevant to the notion of designers as ‘value adders’. Bernhard does admit, however, that to get things done is “more difficult in the social design thing than, for example, the product design area”. Far and foremost, because a product designer can create a product that can be produced and can be put on the market, whereas “you as a designer don’t particularly have an influence”. Nevertheless, Bernhard personally wants to be fully included throughout a project. “If I’m involved [at] the end of the whole process, I cannot change anything anymore. And I cannot do my job”, he firmly asserts. Bernhard, however, does seem to take issue with the term ‘value adders’, especially when people approach him and say: “we have all these things done and we need you to make it pretty”. In that case, he will adamantly answer that he is not there to sugar coat ideas. This means that from time to time, one does have to be selective, “because otherwise you don’t stay true to your core values”, according to Bernhard. In Bernhard’s practise, these decisions are based on the client’s hypocrisy or insincerity, for instance, does the client has a genuine environmental commitment or is it a case of ‘greenwashing’ whereby they solely appeal to be environmentally friendly. In addition, Bernhard’s choice is also influenced by the simple fact that he would not be able to do every project that comes his way. Most interestingly, Bernhard recounts that he did financially worse than when he did not stay true to his values. “What I learned now is that, like, if you look at where is really your passion and where can you really add something […]. You also can create a financial model around this which will allow you to be this stable”, he elaborates. The designer seeks the cause of this by the idea that this way, one could “actively market towards people who you want to work with”. For instance, if one knows that he or she would like to work on social issues,
then they can approach companies and organizations which work on these questions.

Although Bernhard indicates that he became “a bit fed up with all these post-it workshops”, co-design and participatory design methods still form an essential basis for the social designer. “Because I don’t think that designers can work on these issues alone”, he states. He elaborates: “I usually always work together with an expert who has knowledge about it because I don’t. I simply don’t understand the system behind it. I don’t understand the political influences which are there”. Bernhard’s employs the term ‘experts’ here in a broad sense, they could, for example, be the community who lives in the neighbourhoods. “It could be the people who live the problem”, according to Bernhard. Nonetheless, he usually does not try to be that harsh on practising these methods. Far and foremost because “you oblige people to come up with a solution in a day which they couldn’t solve in several months”. Bernhard, therefore, does consider himself a ‘facilitator’ a concept proposed by Melles, et al. describing a practise whereby designers work with a client instead of for a client. “I think that’s quite clear”, Bernhard states. The designer indicates that he enjoys facilitating the investigation and the discovery of people’s creative process, guiding them with the knowledge he has of how to clarify creative ideas. “I usually try to stimulate that process, but not direct it”, the designer indicates. Bernhard additionally notes that he also applies these methods in client-based settings. Partly because facilitating workshops of this kind is a valuable source of revenue. At last, if one is to improve the position of the socially responsible designer, we should “start educating clients”, according to Bernhard. He elaborates: “we would start to educate the clients of the social designer like, for example, municipality ministries of what social design can do for them”. That way designers can not only stimulate their own market but social issues will also be approached more openly, Bernhard details. Additionally, he would like to see that social designers are more involved in decision-making processes - “but this can only happen when the clients or the people who we can work for know about it”.

In short, it has become apparent that the concept of the social is interwoven in
Bernhard’s design practice. Far and foremost because he concludes that design has always been about the human. Consequently, his design practice does not focus in particular on the material aspect of design, but rather on the immaterial features of design. Bernhard attempts to develop new tools to support our daily systems to provide innovative ideas and to question existing strategies. Nevertheless, he does not feel addressed by the calls from the Dutch institutions as they are the wrong party to call. The dynamic between self-initiated projects and client-based assignments is “the trickiest thing” a social designer has to deal with, according to Bernhard. Typically, because the problems these designers work on are not momentarily - they are continuous processes which regularly changes. A conventional contractor-based relationship is, therefore, always a hurdle. Companies continually require a deliverable ‘tool’ which is supposed to solve a societal problem. Instead, the designer prefers a ‘partnership relation’, an approach that is intended to stimulate a long-term connection. Money plays an essential role in why self-initiated projects are still necessary and plentiful. Some projects simply lack a client base, according to Bernhard. Power relations could form a blockade, as well, as Bernhard describes that as a designer, you do not always have an influence on the process. The designer also seems to take issue with the term ‘value adders’, because sugar coating ideas are not his concern. This means that from time to time, one has to be selective, for a social designer must stay true to his core values. Most interestingly, Bernhard describes that he did financially worse when he did not stay true to these values - one can always create a financial model around their passion and that accommodates a better profile for marketing towards you client-base. Co-design and participatory design methods still are essential for Bernard. Far and foremost because designers can not work on these issues alone. Social problems are complex, and working with knowledgeable experts is, therefore, a must. Often these experts include the community that lives the problem. Bernhard then regards himself as a facilitator of stimulating a creative solution-finding orientated process. At last, if one is to improve the position of the socially responsible designer, we should start educating clients, according to Bernhard. Additionally, he
would like to see that social designers are more involved in decision-making processes.

2.6 Case study: Visual Analysis Foundation We Are - Daeun Lim

As mentioned in the chapter on the case case-study selection criteria, the works of Korean illustrator, graphic designer, and textile designer Daeun Lim, will form the departure of this visual analysis. First and foremost, because the design practises of Bernhard Lenger more often then not focusses on the *immaterial* features of design. For instance, Bernhard indicates that many of his assignments and projects within the collective Foundation We Are include workshops, research reports, and speeches at conferences. Nevertheless, ideas and proposals from other designers in the collective, do find their way into the visual sphere. In 2018, for example, Daeun conceived the self-initiated project: *How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit*. Daeun Lim graduated *cum laude* from the Design Academy Eindhoven in 2016 and is since 2018 ‘illustrator in chief’ at Foundation We Are. Next to her position in the foundation, Daeun has founded her personal Rotterdam based design studio named Studio Eemda. She describes herself as a storyteller who employs various communication tools such as illustration, costumes, and objects. Throughout her practise, Daeun has worked on a diverse palette of projects ranging from visual identities, publications, and performances. This visual analysis will take a closer look at several designs that arose from two different projects. The first set of visuals encapsulates several illustrations commissioned by the Dutch social design collective Idiotēs in 2019. The second case-study is Daeun’s self-initiated project *How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit*, conceived in collaboration with Foundation We Are. The two leading questions in this visual inquiry are: as a social designer, how does Daeun practice social responsibility in and outside the confines of the foundation? And how does she maximise addressing the social trough the visual in client-based and self-initiated settings?

The small design collective Idiotēs is an initiative of Dutch social designer Marieke van Dijk and is since 2018 based in Castricum, North-Holland. The collective describes themselves as a design studio in the field of design research, future exploration,
and strategy. The collective holds the position that “‘imagination & creativity’ are the main ingredients [of] the postnormal era” (Idiotēs). According to their description on the networking website LinkedIn, the collective provides opportunities for finding solutions to challenges in society by, where possible, working together with others in order to improve good practices and to initiate radical change in the world. They label their approach as “designing in a context where facts are uncertain, values are compromised, interests are high, and decisions are urgent” (Idiotēs). The initiative has carefully constructed several points on how it aims to bring about this change. Their six design approaches are:

- “Show don’t tell” - quality through the power of design.
- Being optimistic.
- Involving as many as people as possible; “design and learn together”.
- Connecting multiple disciplines in a network structure.
- Having an eye for the broader context to arrive at feasible plans.
- Offering ‘customization’ as the collective desires to be “part of the solution” (Idiotēs).

These approaches are translated into three core values of the collective. First, the collective aims to be equal, open and inclusive in an attempt to stimulate ‘togetherness’. Second, the organisation seeks to be ‘unusual’ in their working methods by experimenting based on intuition, experience, and talent. At last, the designers strive to work in a ‘resolving’ manner, indicating a desire for tangible, realistic solutions by collecting, analysing, and “doing what is necessary” (Idiotēs). Trough the years the collective has worked in collaboration with many municipalities, universities, and NGO’s. Their latest project, for instance, involved a digital platform called Wijzer.amsterdam which strives to provide contact, help and information for everybody in and around the city of Amsterdam. The platform provides answers to banal questions such as: how do I delete apps? And how do I borrow an e-book from the library? However, articles containing information on the Coronavirus and other health issues have also found their way onto the platform. In her role as a visual brand designer, Daeun received the request
to develop Idiotē’s visual identity accompanied by several illustrations which could be applied on digital platforms and printed communication materials. As stated on her website, the visuals must communicate the following five main values (Studio Eemda):

- Hack the system
- Positive revolution
- Strategic imagination
- Connecting the dots
- Never grow

The six illustrations that Daeun presented throughout her website for Idiotēs tend to lean towards the abstract. Simplistic shapes and lines are the dominant graphical style. Lines are thin but precise, severing as a grid for the drawing (see fig. 18). The grid is filled with seemingly random shapes and forms, representing cubes, clouds, or stairs - all of which are filled with colour. However, their fill colour seems to be applied in haste and by hand, as many forms still display open areas, exposing the white background.

![Fig. 18. Animated illustration by Lim, Daeun. Stills from GIF. 2019. Studio Eemda, www.daeunlim.com/projects/idiotes.html.](image)

The quick hand-drawn style forms a stark contrast with the precise thin lines. Colour is applied only sparsely and selectively throughout the illustrations. A rich dark blue, a light skin-toned brown, and a pastel-coloured green form the main ingredients of the minimal colour palette. Other drawings from the series are less abstract and display recognisable human structures and features. Figure 19, for instance, seems to represent a factory with pipes and chimneys. The image also presents a human ear and hand, elements that reoccur in figure 20. This particular illustration, still preserving the
graphical style, exhibits two humans. The thin-lined grid is transformed into a clothing style and is accompanied by a digitally drawn hand that hovers above one of the eyes of the two figures. Last in the series are several illustrated faces, which seem to be a continuation of figure 20 (see fig. 21). The faces are assembled from forms and lines recycled from preceding drawings. It is essential to note that, aside from the faces, the illustrations are animated and presented in a GIF format. The animations show slight movements of hands, plumes or round objects moving through the image (fig. 18).

It can be assumed that the representational meaning of the illustrations for Idiotēs are led by the five core values by which the collective aims to bring about social innovation (hack the system, positive revolution, strategic imagination, connecting the dots, never grow). The animated illustrations in figure 18 and 19 do seem to incorporate many of these values. For example, the notion of ‘the system’ is thoughtfully translated
into the thin lines of the grid. These lines from the underlying foundation on which the drawing is constructed - escaping it seems impossible and punishable by visual discomfort. At the same time, the carefully placed thin lines denote the idea of strategy; nothing in the drawing is left to chance. Idiotē’s idea of ‘strategic imagination’ seems to be visually represented by Daeun through the human hand and ear in figure 19. Far and foremost, because the notion of ‘imagination’ is principally a human trait and, therefore, demands to transcend the strategic, logical thin lines of ‘the system’. Nevertheless, some of the images do not seem to intend to ‘hack the system’ or to incentivise ‘positive revolution’. On the contrary, the repetitive animation in the GIF emphasises that there is no way out. The round object in figure 18 keeps following the same route with the same beginning and end. Figure 20, and to a lesser extent figure 21, however, do seem to bring in the ‘social’. Although still subjected to the strict grid of the system, the characters are, above all, still human. Here, the unpredictable ‘social’ prevails over the predictable regularity of the system. Daeun achieves this by placing the human elements on top of the gridded lines of the clothes and highlighting their social and unpredictable nature by animating a sneaky smile and a quick hand move. This way, the figures are granted a personality with the agency to ‘connect the dots’. Additionally, by keeping the human personalities distinct and recognisable, Daeun highlights the notion of ‘never grow’: the illustrations are people, not just a number in a larger whole. In a compositional sense, the illustrations do not carry any textual information which quickly directs the onlooker to seek information in the deeper layers of the visuals. The animation of the illustrations is essential to the visuals interactive meaning, however, Daeun does not present us with the integration of these animated visuals. One is, therefore, left to wonder how these
images function and how they conceive meaning once shown on a printed medium. This is not a trivial concern since Daeun describes on her website that the illustrations need to be used in a digital environment as well as on “printed matters” (Studio Eemda).

Daeun’s project: *How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit*, in contrast, aims to be more than a short-term assignment. In her endeavour, Daeun sets out to develop a “support system for grassroots activists by fostering international micro-alliances” (Studio Eemda). According to Foundation We Are: “grassroots activists are citizens that turn to activism as a reaction to intense local injustice” (Foundation We Are). As these activists are often operating alone, they lack proper financial and professional support and are frequently targeted by the institutions with intimidation, blackmailing, illegal arrests, and death threats, according to the foundation. As a potential solution, Daeun suggests the creation of an online platform that collectivises lone activists and, at the same time, displays how people can become ‘an ally’, regardless of geographical location or level of involvement (Studio Eemda). Her proposal does not come from thin air as she collaborated throughout the initiative with the Kenyan human rights activist ‘Francis’. “His latest project focuses on researching and documenting cases of police brutality and extrajudicial killings during the disputed presidential election in Kenya 2017”, according to the foundation. As soon as their joint project took off, Daeun has been visually documenting her journey. This documentation process gave rise to the title of the project as she describes that she went from “not giving a shit” to “becoming an ally” (Foundation We Are). Moreover, the process gave way to alternative methods of supporting grassroots activists. For instance, by following their social media accounts and consequently structuring them “according to people’s levels of empathy” (Studio Eemda). This method is described by the studio and the foundation as redefining “the idea of alliances and the way they are formed” (Foundation We Are). Furthermore, the platform is described as serving as a “two-layer safety net — digital and physical” (Studio Eemda). Physical in the sense that, in the future, the social designer seeks to conduct field research in Kenya to gain more knowledge about the local grassroots
activists and their activities. There, according to the foundation, she will develop a branding concept that “communicates their collective identity” (Foundation We Are).

In her project in collaboration with Foundation We Are, the illustration does stay the preferred medium of communication. Most notably, the drawings preserve the same playful hand-drawn look and feel as the illustrations for Idiotēs. Figure 22, for example, maintains the dynamic play on lines and with colour filled shapes. While a more detailed selection of colours is employed this time, they remain in the same soft character of the pastel spectrum. When observed up-close, the colour filled shapes do hold various textures. The drawn shapes represent a figure divided into three sections: the head, the waste, and the leg area. These areas are interchangeable, which means that by rearranging different shapes in different sections amounts to a new and unique figure. Accompanying the sketches is a semi-bold sans-serif font for main body text and a play-full hand-drawn font for headings on websites or sweaters. The two sweaters in figure 24 are in pastel brown and blue and hold the title of the project; How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit. Daeun also presents us with an image of the landing page of the digital platform of the project (see fig. 25). Here, the onlooker is introduced to two small illustrations: a clenched fist and a flower. Nevertheless, the pastel colours and the combination of the clean sans-serif and playful hand-drawn font stay the same, holding together the visual identity of the project.

The symbolic meanings of the illustrations for Daeun’s project How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit, however, seem less apparent. For example, an essential part of the visuals for the project is the playful interaction of rearranging different shapes...
in different sections to create a new figure. However, who does the figure represent? It could signify us, the ‘allies’ because we come in many shapes, forms, colours, and locations. In this perspective, the images in figure 23 could be read from left to right as an act of progression and transformation, symbolising a journey from ‘not giving a shit’ to ‘becoming an ally’. Nevertheless, the interchangeability of the different sections can also represent the grassroots activist since they too come in many variations. As Daeun placed the characters always alone, it could hint at the lonesome situation of these activists. With a small contribution, an ‘ally’ has the power the transform the activist and to improve his ability to become a more effective activist. The latter reading seems somewhat problematic. In particular, because the term ‘ally’ in other contexts carries a different and less prevaricating association. Being an ally of LGBT social movements or the black lives matter movement, for instance, connotes someone who cares and supports the cause and helps to achieve the goal that the activist wants to accomplish - and not a financial donor who dictates a purpose that it deems more appropriate. Moreover, what both readings have in common is they seem to communicate the false notion of choice.

The interchangeability of the three sections implies the idea of agency in the way personalities change. This idea is emphasised by the multiplicity (fig. 26) in which...
Dauen presents her illustrations: pick and choose a transformation of your liking. In this sense, the illustrations do not symbolise unity but diversity instead. The multiple readings that the illustrations provoke is a testament to the complex issues Daeun aims to address: What is the position of the west in development aid? What role has the individual to play? And how does one motivate someone to actually ‘give a shit’? It is, therefore, not exceptional that Daeun’s illustrations are accompanied by a significant amount of textual information. These texts have an explanatory potential that the visuals lack. That position is confirmed when Daeun chooses to print the title of the project on the sweaters rather than an illustration (fig 24). At last, the soft pastel colour pallet, the care-free drawing style and font Daeun has applied, does reveal something about the intent of her project. It connotates an idea of kindness, peace and perhaps a sense of neutrality, associations that might be very helpful in accomplishing the mission of the project: transforming as many people as possible into an ally for grassroots activists.
In conclusion, it becomes apparent that Daeun’s assignments do expose some interesting mechanisms concerning how she, as a visual designer, practices social responsibility. Her commissioned assignment for Idiotēs was sharply formulated into five core values in which the collective aimed to combat social issues. These explicitly formulated goals also found its translation of Daeun’s visual work as they are precise and well-defined. See, for example, the thin, gridded lines representing ‘the system’ and the small animations conveying an idea of human personality in the two characters. The illustrations are cleverly multi-layered and contain plenty of visual references to the intentions set out by the organisation. Although the designer’s graphical style, hand-drawn and care-free, stayed the same in both assignments, the meanings of the illustrations of How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit are less defined. In the project, in collaboration with Bernhard Lenger’s Foundation We Are, Daeun herself determines the boundaries of the assignment. It becomes apparent that the complexity and long-term solution-based thinking leads to a visual language that is less explicit. The somewhat ambiguous meaning of the illustrations attests to this idea. Daeun’s long-term and self-initiated project is, to a large extent, an exploration of visual meaning and is therefore still malleable. Furthermore, in How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit one could see an example of co-design and participatory design methods. Daeun indicates that she collaborated with Kenyan grassroots activist ‘Francis’ to induce people to support activist. Nevertheless, from the analysis, it is unclear how this co-process is made visually traceable and tangible. In addition, Daeun’s self-initiated project proves to be an example of a fraternalisic approach to design, as described by Thorpe and Gamman, in which designers share a “equitable, mutual and caring concern for and between actors in the project and towards the project itself” (Thorpe and Gamman 222). Her project is based, first and foremost, on the interaction between Francis and other activists, with Daeun approaching them on an equal footing.
3. Discussion

3.1 Equating practise and theory

Throughout the visual analysis and the interviews, it has become apparent that Studio de Ronners, Studio Boot, Foundation We Are, and subsequently Studio Eemda, share different perspectives and approaches about the notion of social responsibility. Where the brothers Ronner do not classify themselves as ‘social designers’, Bernhard Lenger, chairman of Foundation We Are, doubted if he could be called a designer at all. Nonetheless, every studio has engaged in social projects and commercial assignments to some extent. See, for example, Studio Boot’s involvement in Social Label and the mission that make the city of Den Bosch more visually attractive for its everyday citizens or Studio Eemda’s commissioned illustrations for the social design collective Idiotēs. That does not mean, however, that each studio falls under the traditional description of the ‘social designer’ as set out by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council and subdivided into two criteria by the design and communication academic Thomas Markussen: First, social design is defined by distinctive, participatory, working and operating methods. Secondly, social design prioritises collective and social ends over commercial ambitions. Surprisingly, the first criterion appears to be a more substantial hurdle for most studios. Participatory and co-design methods in their conventional classification as designing not for a client but with a client, are not always regarded as desirable. Petra, from the graphic design atelier Studio Boot, employs strong language when describing her position on the design approaches: “that is of course also bullshit”. Her main issue resides in the idea that predetermined methods or systems are not suitable for “human contacts”. That perspective is reflected in the visual analysis. The studio has not involved performance artists in their design process for the Leids Cabaret Festival nor have they actively engaged with the citizens of Den Bosch in the run-up to their poster exhibition for the Nieuwe Bosche School. Studio De Ronners, likewise, express a similar sentiment: “some people can design, and some people cannot” - “stick to what you know”. The graphic designers
do, however, acknowledge the essential role a client plays within the design process for they provide “a kind of extra deepening”. Nonetheless, co-design in its traditional form within a commissioned assignment “does not make much sense” because it just “does not work”, according to Studio De Ronners. The brothers themself do indicate that they see other forms of co-design methods such as the collaboration with other creative professionals in their self-initiated projects or the intense interaction with the curators of The International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam 2018. However, they seem to describe a practice of participation as an information provider. A misconception defined by Gabriel Arboleda, whereby people participate only in the provision of information for the designer to integrate into his own design. From the three interviews, solely Bernhard Lenger from Foundation We Are indicated that he employs co-design and participatory design methods. Far and foremost because he believes that designers can not work on these issues alone. The designer described that he aims to involve those “who live the problem” and let them be the experts in the design process. At the same time, however, he does not strive to be that resolute on practising these methods. Principally, because these methods “oblige people to come up with a solution in a day which they couldn’t solve in several months”, according to Bernhard. One could observe this perspective in the project How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit from designer Daeun Lim conceived in collaboration with Bernhard’s foundation. Here, Daeun indicates that she worked together with Kenyan grassroots activist ‘Francis’ to motivate people to support individual activist. Nevertheless, from the analysis, it is unclear how this co-process is made visually traceable and tangible.

A notion that stems from participatory and co-design approaches is the idea that a designer becomes a facilitator of a design process instead of a mediator. The concept does seem in line with the position the studios hold in regard to co-design methods. Bernhard, for instance, designates his role as a designer very clearly as that of a facilitator. He states that he appreciates facilitating the investigation and the discovery of people’s creative process, guiding them with the knowledge he has of how to interpret creative ideas. His statement that he usually tries to stimulate that process - but not direct it - resonates with the position
of the designer within participatory methods as proposed by Sanders and Stappers. They describe that the designer still holds valuable knowledge and have “highly developed skills that are relevant at larger levels of scope and complexity (Sanders and Stappers 15). Moreover, Bernards description of his creative practice seems to coincides with the fracternalisic approach to design as described by Thorpe and Gamman, whereby designers share an “equitable, mutual and caring concern for and between actors in a project, and towards the project itself” (Thorpe and Gamman 222). Daeun Lim’s self-initiated social project proves to be an example here once again. Her project is first and foremost built upon the interaction between Francis and other activists whereby Daeun approaches them on an equal foothold. In contrast, with Studio De Ronners statement that “some people can design, and some people cannot”, the role of facilitator seems out of the window. They indicate that they desire clear roles in their practice, where “one is the client and the other the contractor”. At first sight, Petra’s position on the different roles is ambiguous as she states that she sees herself as a designer not as a mediator nor facilitator. What she exactly means with that statement, however, remains unclear. Nevertheless, elsewhere she details that she sees designers as mentors, whereby one always needs to be “art director in charge” of the product: “otherwise it can never be something of high quality”. Here Petra seems to prefer the role as a mediator were design for a client is the desired procedure.

Most interestingly, the interviews revealed that all graphic designers employ certain strategies in order to maximise their opportunities to carry social responsibility even when they predominantly operate within the commercial sphere. These strategies are, in some shape or form, variations on the thoughts laid out by Victor Papanek whereby designers are directed to make an “a priori judgment as to whether the products he is asked to design or redesign merit his [sic] attention at all” (Jackson 308). The approach that lays closest to Papanek’s work ethic is that of Foundation We Are. In his interview, Bernhard explains that from time to time, one has to be selective; “otherwise, you don’t stay true to your core values”. This implicates that Bernhard does disregard potential assignments when they do not suit his practice. Financial concerns do not play a role in
these decisions as he describes that he did financially worse when he did not stay true to his values. The idea is that one could “actively market towards people who you want to work with”. For example, if one decides he or she wants to focus on social issues, then they should approach the businesses and organisations that focus on such matters. Likewise, Studio Boot expresses a similar sentiment. Petra admits that, over the years, she “probably intuitively, unknowingly, just made turns when [they] wanted to do things” and thereby “also said no to some customers”. This approach has worked for Petra and Studio Boot, as she explains that in twenty-seven years, even without acquisition, they have never gone without work. She then agrees with the suggestion if this is part of the profiling of Studio Boot. “You have to profile yourself as a designer, otherwise, you will get the wrong assignments”. Studio De Ronners approach, however, is less straightforward but leads to similar outcomes. The brothers indicate that the studio rolled “more or less accidentally [...] into those projects”, instead of deliberately seeking social goals. According to Arwen, however, this is not directly related to the marketing and profiling of the studio. In actuality, it is the other way around: “it is the customer base that gives colour to who we are”. Matthijs elaborates by stating that the work they produce colours the identity of the studio. Throughout the years, the studio has established a client-base mainly in the social and semi-public field. It seems to be the case that, these institutions can find their way to the studio relatively quickly, based on former assignments and references from other organisations, producing a ‘bubble’ in which the studio predominantly operates.

These strategies all seem to be aimed at eliminating the situations where a designer has to be ‘just’ a ‘good enough’ responsive designer in the first place and to attract clients where the social can be maximized. Studio Boot, for instance, indicates that in her daily practice, she does not very often have to deal with a “compromise”. This perspective also emerges from the cases in the visual analysis, or rather from those that have been omitted. Finding commercially commissioned projects/campaigns with social messages proves to be surprisingly challenging. A possible explanation for this dynamic could lay in the interviews with Foundation We Are and Studio Boot. Both believe that genuine social
projects require long-term thinking; “you have to be able to interact with people, you have to be able to make communities”, according to Petra - the humanitarian side is essential. Bernhard explains the dynamic of long-term thinking in greater detail and deems it the “trickiest thing” a designer has to deal with. Typically, because the intricacies on which these designers work are continuous processes that change regularly. A conventional commercial contractor-based relationship is, therefore, often a hurdle because companies continually desire quick deliverable ‘tools’ and solutions. Petra and Bernhard, thus, seem to seek a ‘partnership relation’ in their social projects, an approach that intendeds to stimulate a long-term connection. However, because long-term social commercial commissioned assignments are sparse, designers are inclined to move to self-initiated social projects or incentives that are funded predominantly through public means. For instance, Foundation We Are received a grant from the Dutch Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, Studio Boot’s participation in the Rewrite Your Future exposition is made possible by crowdfunding and by a donation of the municipality of ‘s-Hertogenbosch, and Studio De Ronners client, IABR, is funded by the municipality of Rotterdam as well as the Dutch Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie. Consequently, this leads to a rather black and white portfolio of assignments that either contain plenty of room for social engagement or non at all.

Nevertheless, even with a looser definition of ‘commercially commissioned’ assignments, the notion of a socially responsive approach to design as defined by Adam Thorpe and Lorraine Gamman still holds meaning. Far and foremost, because designers have yet to deal with the power dynamics that emerge in a client-based environment. The scholar’s notion describes an approach where a designer does what it can to respond to the context of available resources, including individual agency and discretion. In practice, ‘doing what one can’ often translates into being steadfast and headstrong, which sometimes leads to a kind of tension. For instance, the Ronner brothers describe that more often than not, when the studio is working with very commercial clients, they also have to work with the clients’ marketing team. In those situations, making a radical change is particularly challenging, according to the studio. Petra continues on
a similar tone. She expresses that Studio Boot never delivers a product ‘on-demand’. And if marketing ideas of a project differ from the vision of Studio Boot, it naturally leads to discussion. Moreover, Bernhard recognizes that it is more difficult to get things done in terms of social design than, for example, product design. Most of all, because a product designer can create a product that can be produced and put on the market, while “you, as a designer, don’t have a particular influence on it”. Nevertheless, Bernhard indicates that if he is not fully involved in the process, he cannot change anything and consequently, cannot do his job. Bernhard, therefore, usually demands full discretion in the projects he is requested to do. Moreover, when Bernhard describes how Foundation We Are came to be, he mentioned that people took him more seriously because he was the CEO or chairman of a foundation. This “communication strategy” as Bernhard calls it, is a tool for designers to attain influence in processes where an individual designer would be limited. Bernhard provides a personal example, where he was perceived to be ‘just’ “a young designer who has no idea of the world”. In these cases, joining an ‘entity’ such as the foundation is an effective way to enlarge one ability for social responsibility.

The tangible differences that can be observed between commercial and self-initiated projects does not mean, however, that one paradigm rejects the other. Although, with a healthy dose of criticism, none of the studio’s flat-out rejects the paradigm that resulted from neoliberal thinking. A notion that goes against Papanek’s unnuanced description that the ‘socially useful’ paradigm and the commercial paradigm are polar opposites. Many of the designers are still willing to work with the sector, even with the idea of social responsibility in mind. Petra, from Studio Boot, emphasises that one should never foolishly state that they will never work for commercial clients. However, she adds to that by stating that one “must, of course, be allowed to and be able to develop an autonomous visual language”. Additionally, Bernhard reveals that, more often than not, he applies co-design and participatory design methods in client-based settings. Partially because facilitating these kinds of workshops is a valuable source of revenue. Only Studio De Ronners, where the social aspect is less pronounced, sees the public
sector and the commercial sector as two distinct entities where the balances are different. Nevertheless, in the spirit of “the studio has to run too”, they still take on assignments in each sphere. That does not take away the fact that they do demand an approach where client and contractor are clear and honest to each other to foster a situation where the brothers can say; “yes, this is what we can support and can get behind”. It seems the case then, that most designers take part in Margolin and Margolin’s assumption that many professionals share the goals of designers who want to do socially responsible work.

At the same time, however, the designers do indicate to be discontent with some aspects of neoliberalism as is in line with the writings of Thomas Markussen which describes that contemporary designers identify it as the grounds of the erosion of social values by the “hijacking” of governance and politics (Markussen 160). Some of these issues do form obstacles in maximising one’s social responsibility within a commercial setting. As mentioned before, short-term thinking is amongst these concerns, however, there is more. Matthijs Ronner, for instance, mentions the term ‘greenwashing’. A phrase that describes a practice whereby businesses pretend to be interested in protecting the environment when in reality they are not (Cambridge Dictionary). Bernhard similarly hints that the sincerity of the client’s will to change is an essential component in his consideration of working for a client. Additionally, he describes that money is often problematic when it comes to maintaining and updating the solutions to social complex problems. “It’s a tricky part”, Bernhard states. Corporations believe that, once a solution has been applied, the project is finished and that the issue has been resolved. Petra, in addition, notes that many people think that graphic designers are just “a service”. However, that is a misconception according to her: “a graphic designer has a vision, has a style, has an opinion, and is of service to the process, but not to the execution”. The term ‘execution’ here, meaning adhering to the goals that are set out by marketing teams to maximise the efficiency of a campaign: “then it is just about making money”, she states.

Petra’s remark also reveals something about her position on the idea of graphic
designers as ‘value adders’ as put forth by Thorpe and Gamman. They write that ‘value adders’ maximize a product’s commercial value through cosmetic styling, improved usability, optimized user experience and enhanced desirability and that most often than not these types of designers lack the control over resources that would allow them to set their own agendas and to enforce them. Although Petra admits there are certainly hierarchies in the creative field, she deems the term coined by the two scholars as being derogatory, especially since she sees graphic designers as central figures of society who are aware of the Zeitgeist in which they live. Likewise, Bernhard also does seem to take issue with the term ‘value adders’. He stated that the approach of “we have all these things done and we need you to make it pretty”, is not the sentiment he prefers - he is not there to solely “sugar coat ideas”. One can observe similar tendencies in Studio De Ronner’s project for IABR. Throughout the visual analysis, it becomes clear that the studio went further than cosmetic styling, optimized user experience and enhanced desirability. For instance, they took the liberty to interpret the title of the biennale, Our Future in the Delta, the Delta of the Future, to come to include a subtle visual warning; the sea is coming, and you better be prepared - a dooming message carefully wrapped in a vivid design. Moreover, in their assignment, the designers emphasized questions such as which materials are we going to use? are they sustainable, and can you reuse them in any another way? They even switched to a more sustainable paper for their printed campaign. Such practices attest to the fact that the designers are more involved in the process than merely on a cosmetic level. This point of view is confirmed in the interviews as well when the brothers state that the intense collaboration with the three curators and the director of the biennale, led to the project being “substantively accurate” and “sharp”. Although all studios seem to accept the idea that a designer carries some form of social responsibility, none of them feels called upon by Dutch institutions in an attempt to encourage the creative industries to take social responsibility and to help resolve complex societal problems. Studio De Ronners indicates that such calls are for the ‘social designers’, a category with which they do not identify. Bernhard from Foundation We Are deems it “the wrong
party to call”. Far and foremost, because Bernhard believes that it is the government itself who need to “open up their minds” and acknowledge that there are problems in society. Petra explains that she assumes that thinking about the social is an intrinsic quality of a socially responsible designer. She, therefore, also feels not called upon by the calls of the various Dutch design institutes because such designers should already be intrinsically motivated. Nonetheless, the designers do have several pieces of advice to improve the position of the responsible designer. Petra argues that “governments just have to take designers seriously, as a real field”. She sees the government as an essential element in bringing more awareness among the general public. Additionally, she also has advice for the designer’s self: “dare to be at the centre of society, she states. “Otherwise, you just can not take the right turns”, according to her. Bernhard seems to agree with Petra’s position that more awareness is needed. However, Bernhard’s advice does not apply to the general public or the governments. He states that it is the client itself that needs to be educated on what social design can do for them. That way, designers can not only stimulate their own market, but social issues will also be approached more openly, according to the chairman. Additionally, Bernhard indicates that he would like to see that social designers become more involved in decision-making processes. However, he acknowledges that “this can only happen when the clients or the people who we can work for know about it”. Studio De Ronners, in contrast, believes that Dutch institutions already do a lot to challenge and stimulate designers to be more socially engaged, in the form of open calls for example. Furthermore, they recognise that designing with materiality and sustainability in mind becomes even more essential in the design practice. Questions such as “where does it come from?” and “what materials do[es one] choose” or “how is it produced”, seem to be leading in many projects. It seems only logical for designers and clients alike, to take such issues into account when engaging in future projects.

At last, throughout the visual analysis and the interviews, it becomes apparent that all graphic designers in some shape or form employ strategies as described by the theory of effectuation to increase their social responsibilities. The bird in the hand principle, for
instance, suggests that designers work with what they have and realistically assess what can be achieved. Studio De Ronners shows this principle in action when they describe that they often have to work with tight budgets in the public sphere, nevertheless, by asking tough and self-reflecting questions, the design agency aims to optimise the campaigns reach and social outcome. Moreover, an example of the patchwork quilt principle can be observed in the practice of Foundation We Are. Bernhard expresses that traditional client-contractor relationships do not work and, therefore, prefers a partnership relation with its clients which stimulates a long-term connection. Daeun Lim’s project for Foundation We Are shows signs of this approach. Here she attempts to establish a long-lasting partnership with grassroots activists. However, aside from self-initiated events and projects such as Petra’s Social Label or Werkwarenhuis, the commissioned assignments discussed within the visual analysis did hardly arise from a ‘partner relationship’. Many of the projects are short-term with predetermined end-goals and desired outcomes where the designer has minimal discretion. Examples here are Daeun Lim’s illustrations for Idiotēs and Studio Boot’s posters for the Leids Cabaret Festival. Most interestingly, however, is that in both cases the discrepancy of commercial and self-initiated projects does not seem to change the designers’ graphical style in a significant way. Petra is able to continue her ‘slightly activist’ and provoking visual language in both her assignments for the Leids Cabaret Festival and the street exposition Rewrite Your Future. Daeun too keeps continuing the play-full and hand-drawn character of her illustrations for Idiotēs as well as in How I Became an Ally From Not Giving A Shit. The affordable loss principle, which describes an approach that suggests that a designer does not lose what cannot be afforded, is particularly interesting in the light of the research question. The principal hypothesis for this writing assumes that to be socially responsible, as described in the traditional sense by Victor Papanek, one sometimes has to reject commercially commissioned assignments and that such an approach counts towards an un-affordable loss. First and foremost, because such strategies are more an “aspiration than a description of any real-world practice” (Thorpe and Gamman 220). Nevertheless, it becomes clear that by Foundation We Are
and Studio Boot, where social aspirations are more pronounced, being selective and rejecting assignments is estimated to be a rather affordable loss. It seems to contribute to the profiling and positioning of a studio in an attempt to attract customers where the social can be maximized. At the same time, it once again attests to the idea that designers seek to reduce the circumstances where one has to be ‘just’ a ‘good enough’ responsive designer.

\[ \text{3.2 Closing conclusions} \]

The answer to the question “in which ways do Dutch graphic-designers practise the notion of social responsibility in a market-driven economy?”, is, as many things are, intricate and multifaceted. In all case-studies put forth in this thesis, designers employ various strategies to subduing the situations where a designer has to be ‘just’ a ‘good enough’ responsive designer in the first place. For some studios, being selective and rejecting potential job opportunities is not shunned. It becomes clear that for design studio’s with socially engaging aspirations, being selective is considered to be an affordable loss and can, therefore, not simply be classified as ‘an aspiration’ rather than a description of any real-world practice. Such methods seem to contribute to the profiling and positioning of a studio in an attempt to attract clients with assignments that offer great discretion and plenty of opportunities of engagement with the social sphere. Nonetheless, these approaches are not available to everyone. Studios that already have settled a name and identity within the private sector are less likely to change their practices and decline jobs for in these cases such approaches can be an unrealistic and costly undertaking. In these circumstances, establishing a client base ‘bubble’ trough references and via other assignments is one way to maximise the opportunity to get the appropriate socially engaging projects. Nevertheless, in these particular situations, the notion of social responsive designing becomes even more profound. Far and foremost, because a designer’s discretion and agency to ‘steer the ship’ are severely restricted by other stakeholders within an assignment. Marketing-teams, for instance, often form a hurdle. From the case
studies, it becomes clear that the best approach in these situations is to be headstrong and steadfast - do not shun discussion. Furthermore, I would like to suggest that, for the latter category of design studios, social responsiveness appears to be fluid - it comes, and it goes. This is to say that in some cases, the opportunities to be socially responsible are practically non-existent whereas in other assignments there is plenty. Possibilities for social engagement are then solely determined by the client. The question that remains is if this is enough to be classified as a socially responsible designer. In my personal opinion, that answer would be yes - provided that a designer does what it can to maximise a positive social outcome and creates conditions and scenarios that foster it. That is ‘good enough’.

At last, I would like to note that, throughout the theoretical framework, the interviews and visual analysis, I have employed the terms ‘social designer’ and ‘graphic designer’ interchangeably. Far and foremost because the former does not exclude the latter. Nevertheless, It has become increasingly clear that both terms require more clarification as they suggest a difference in approach concerning social responsibility. Aside from the definition provided by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council, social designers seem to employ graphic design, or any other form of creative creation for that matter, as a means and not as an end in itself. This distinction is significant, for it implies that social designers can move quicker in positions that advance beyond the notion of just adding value to a market-ready product. To achieve this in a commercial setting, it becomes increasingly important for designers to design with and not for a client, working together on determining what the desired outcomes are - socially and financially. Additionally, I would like to suggest that, in ideal circumstances, the term ‘assignment’, commercial or not, should not be applied. Far and foremost, because the term describes a practice with a beginning and an end, with predetermined conditions and desired results. Instead, the phrase ‘project’ is preferable because it hints at a long-term relationship whereby there is room for a more responsive approach. These facilitating positions, whereby designers have enough discretion to ‘steer the ship,’ are nonetheless rather scarce in the commercial landscape. Not because designers are not
willing to work with the market sector but because focus still lies on immediate tangible results. Part of these short-term agenda’s may indeed lay in the idea that longer timelines are less financially valuable. In that regard, the notion of the ‘good enough’ designer as proposed by Thorpe and Gamman is still notably relevant. I, for instance, would like to argue that the plethora of self-initiated socially responsible projects is a direct result of responsive and effectuated design practices whereby designers recognise that assets and individual agency are more widely available within self-initiated projects.

### 3.3 Suggestions for further research

Although this writing has provided valuable insights into the practices and methods of designers, it has just touched the surface of how social responsibilities are accomplished. Further research is necessary to get a better grasp of a dynamic and changing field that is still in development. It seems to be the case that designers are ready for a transformation from designing with instead of designing for. Nevertheless, this desire does feel like a one-way interaction. It is time for businesses and corporations in the private sector, to open up their power structures to allow for the insights of a social designer. (Semi-) governments can play a vital part in incentivising these changes. See, for example, a project by the municipality of Amsterdam labelled De Digitale Stad in which the city provides a platform for artists and tech companies to work together on addressing ethical issues that arise from digitalisation. Nevertheless, these practices must amount to tangible and workable results. That is an area where more academic research is necessary for it seems to be the case that long-term projects are at more substantial risk to linger on the conceptual level. Moreover, perhaps it is time to evaluate the results of socially responsible design projects - commercially or not. Such an inquiry is particularly appealing in the light of the writings by the design and communication academic Thomas Markussen. Markussen states that unrealistic expectations and excessive claims about the added value of social design could undermine further advancement of
the field. Far and foremost, because it hinders the identification of the parameters and procedures to be used to determine the effects of socially responsible design (Markussen 161). Do we need to adjust expectations? What classifies as a ‘good result’? And does it live up to the ‘design power’ so many institutions have granted the creative field?
Due to technical limitations, the interview is divided into two parts which resets the timestamps of the questions and answers.

**First Section**

00:00:02  
Kelvin: Ik heb een paar vragen staan die ik graag met jullie wil behandelen en ik denk als het eerste is en dan zit je op dezelfde voet. Een beetje ja, ik heb het in mijn email al gehad over het idee van sociaal verantwoordelijkheid als ontwerper. Misschien heb je dat zelf wel een keer gehoord. Maar wat versta je eigenlijk zelf onder dat begrip? Wat is voor jou, persoonlijk, een sociaal verantwoordelijk ontwerper?

00:00:31  
Arwen: Kijk, wij doen het niet bewust of zo wij, maar wij hebben wel afgelopen jaren, dat je daar als bureau min of meer toevallig in die projecten rolt, of dat je een project initieert met andere. Zoals wij, en jij refereerde naar “die kantine” ofzo, dat was meer een project dat met een paar ontwerpt vrienden, architecten, schrijvers, dat we hadden geïnitieerd. Maar dat komt dan langs, en dat is niet dat je... Ja dat is meer uit gevoel en dat dan bij je past...

00:01:12  
Matthijs: Ja en je signaleert dan iets ook. Eigenlijk was dat het probleem met de leegstand van winkels,

00:01:30  
Arwen: winkels,

00:01:20  
Matthijs: Winkels, kantoorpanden en wat dan ook. Voor ons was dat van “okay, je kan ook op een soort op een andere op een andere manier met een initiatief laten zien wat je wat de mogelijkheden zijn” En dat je daar ook het sociale aan verbindt. Zo is dat toen eigenlijk ontstaan met “die kantine”.

00:01:44  
Arwen: Maar dat was eigenlijk in de vorige crisis.

00:01:51  
Kelvin: En we hebben nu natuurlijk weer een nieuwe crisis.

00:01:55  
Arwen: Ja nou het was 2007, 2008 ofzo, Nou, ietsje later denk ik, 2010 ofzo. Maar toen was er heel veel leegstand, en dat was meer ook van ja wat... En toen binnen de architecten wereld was er toen heel weinig werk en toen op die manier dachten wij van “hoe kunnen we met elkaar een podium zijn voor z’n nieuw initiatief. Ook om te laten zien wat voor werk? Wie zitten daarachter? En wat kan je als bureau iets anders laten zien dan vormgeving.

00:02:29  
Kelvin: Jullie voelden zeg maar met dat eigen initiatief, je voelt je wel in dat opzicht sociaal verantwoordelijk als ontwerper?

00:02:41  
Arwen: Nou ja, verantwoordelijk in die zin, dat je mede nadenkt, eh wat er mogelijk kan zijn
met leegstand in een stad.

Matthijs: omdat wij dat probleem signaleerde, dus op die manier voelen wij ons dan wel verantwoordelijk. En als je het dan breder trekt, kijk in onze dagelijks praktijk. Hebben we dat ook wel. Dat je met opdrachtgevers om tafel zit en dat je denkt van hé, is zoiets wel nodig of... En dan gaat vooral met publiekelijk geld.

Kelvin: Ja.


Matthijs: vooral als je veel opdrachtgevers hebt in het publiek domein ja, dan moet je wel ook die vraag, ook heel erg terecht stellen ook wij als bureau van “hoe gaan we daarmee om?”.

Kelvin: Dus er worden echt daadwerkelijk keuzes gemaakt. Met dat idee in het achterhoofd dat...

Arwen: Het is meer dat je zelf nadenkt, en je opdrachtgevers een spiegel voor houdt. Van ja, is het noodzakelijk of zijn er ook andere wegen wat je met publiekelijk geld kan doen. En of kun je dat nog beter inzetten. Zijn er andere vormen waardoor je misschien een groter bereik kan hebben. In plaats van dat je van deur tot deur een flyer in de brievenbus doet

Arwen: Dus ja, dan zeg je van oké, dan hebt u dit budget, maar misschien is het interessante om dit er mee te doen, want dan heb je een groter bereik. Ben je beter zichtbaar. Dat zijn dan zeg maar keuzes die dan met elkaar voorleggt.

Arwen: Zijn die mogelijkheden, zijn die groter in de publieke sector dan in meer commerciële setting.

Arwen: Ja, maar de commerciële sector vraagt er niet om.

Matthijs: Ja, of ze vragen er om, maar dan is het meer voor greenwashing.

Kelvin: Ja.

Matthijs: Van dat het echt uit een ambitie komt om echt te veranderen.

Kelvin: Loop je daar wel eens tegen aan dan? Dat je zegt van nou, ik wil eigenlijk zelf wel, of ik
zie ik signaleren wat dat eigenlijk niet zo kan. Maar ja, ik moet het toch maar doorzetten, want
het is toch een opdracht.

00:05:24
Arwen: Ja, het is altijd een soort spanningsveld, van ja, bij ons moet de toko ook draaien.

00:05:30
Kelvin: Ja zeker

00:05:31
Arwen: Dus dat, maar hebben, we proberen wel zo lean mogelijk te doen altijd. Dat je wel
duidelijk en eerlijk bent naar elkaar van ja “hier staan we wel achter of niet achter” En die
openheid vinden we ook belangrijk in het hele opdrachtgever en opdrachtnemer-schap.

00:05:54
Kelvin: Ja, en ik zag dat u op jullie website, beschrijf je dan met welke klanten je met name
werkt. En dan zeg je, hè inderdaad, de publieke sector maar ook commerciële sector en dan
“ideële doelen” zeg je dan specifiek. Is die scheidslijn dan zo hard bij jullie?

00:06:12
Arwen: Ja, nou wel commercieel naar publiekelijk instelling, zoals gemeente
semioverheidsinstelling, zoals het waterbedrijf. Daar is wel een heel groot verschil in. Kijk,
de ene dient ook publiekelijk gewin en de andere een commerciële partij die wil gewoon hun
product verkopen of diensten aanbieden. En dat is toch heel iets anders dan een gemeente
of bijvoorbeeld een waterbedrijf. Ja en we doen nou voor “warmte stad”, dat is een nieuwe
energieleverancier van de gemeente Groningen en het waterbedrijf Groningen. Ja, die hebben
gewoon een ambitie om de stad groener te maken. Dat is wel redelijk commercieel of moet je
daar een identiteit voor neerzetten, zodat het iedereen wel aanspreekt. Het is niet ja, het is niet
zoals Essent of een andere partij, waar je met hele slikken dingen en er is genoeg geld om een
campagne te voeren. Ja, de balansen zijn ook daardoor ook anders

00:07:35
Matthijs: Het bijzondere van dat initiatief is, eigenlijk ga je met de taal van, ik zeg maar, van
die grote energiemaatschappijen, ga je eigenlijk een heel duurzaam een nieuw initiatief tonen,
want het is eigenlijk heel bijzonder dat gemeenten en waterbedrijf samen energiemaatschappij
beheren en oprichten. En bezig zijn met alle privatisering en wat dan ook, en de uitverkoop van
die grote energiemaatschappijen naar het buitenland, is dat eigenlijk weer een heel mooi initiatief
en dat, dat vinden we dan weer heel interessant om op die manier daar weer bij betrokken
tezijn als bureau. Dat je dat je denkt van oké. Ja, het is eigenlijk bijna een soort bottom up
initiatief, een startup moet je het zien. Maar ja, dat is wel met publiek geld, wordt er eigenlijk iet
commercieels, en met commerciële taal moet je het wel neerzetten en in de markt zetten.

00:08:33
Kelvin: Ja, en wat project was dat zei je?

00:08:38
Matthijs: warmte stad heet dat.

00:08:38
Kelvin: ja, dat is mooi, zeker. Even kijken hoor. Nou, we hebben eigenlijk al mooi, iets een
stukje behandeld, even kijken... Oh ja, ik zag bijvoorbeeld opdrachten van, en we zitten nog
een beetje in dezelfde thema nu, maar Ik was eigenlijk wel benieuwd hoe je ruimte creëert van
hé, je hebt dan je eigen initiatief en je werkt met publieke sector waar je dan bepaalde hadden
ideeën die sociale goed bevorderen, mee kan nemen. Ik was dan even benieuwd naar hoe je dan,
als je dan z’n commerciële opdracht krijgt, wat er eigenlijk niet zo goed voor geschikt is, omdat de hiërarchie wat anders is omdat je, de macht van ontwerper hé; wat kun je veranderen en uiteindelijk een product, met name vooral bij de commerciële bedrijven? Hoe creëer je dan toch de ruimte om? Nou ja toch een kleine bijdrage daaraan leveren en ik zag dan bij jullie projecten “Building the future of Health” Ik weet niet of dat nou het goede project was hoor. Maar daar zie ik er iets dat misschien wel bij commerciële insteek heeft, maar toch een sociaal karakter heeft. Kun je daar een ruimte creëren in die toch al wel een beetje ja gestructureerde organisaties die ze daar neerzetten.

Arwen: Nou ja, in die zin is een initiatief van het UMCG. Hé het universitair medisch centrum in Groningen, onder andere, ja commercieel. Ja, het is ja, dit was juist ook zeg maar om een verandering teweeg te brengen in architectuur, in het bouwen van ziekenhuizen, hoe je daar op een andere manier naar kan kijken. En er zit verder niet iets commercieel zit erachter, achter z’n congres. Het enige is dat die kaartjes moeten worden verkocht, maar eigenlijk rondom het thema verkoopt zichzelf wel.

Matthijs: Ja, eigenlijk was dat ook heel erg, ging het meer over de inhoud van z’n congres,

Arwen: Hoe vertaal je dat

Matthijs: en eigenlijk mochten we, hebben we daar ja, kijk wij als bureau zoeken we ook echt per opdracht, wel ja, wat zijn de randen van onze mogelijkheden qua creativiteit en vrijheden, en dat verschilt natuurlijk per opdracht. Maar we zoeken wel echt die randen op. Ook al is het een hele commerciële opdrachtgever, dan proberen we toch die opdrachtgever te verrassen en een andere kijk te geven op de eerste gestelde vragen.

Kelvin: Ja, dit is misschien ook nog wel interessant. Er zijn verschillende instanties in Nederland bijvoorbeeld de Raad Voor Cultuur, en er is nog eentje. Creatief industriefonds... iets in die geest. De naam ontgaat me even.

Arwen: Stimulering ’s fonds voor de creatieve industrie

Kelvin: Juist. Die hebben in verschillende documenten hebben ze eigenlijk een soort oproep gedaan aan ontwerpers om bij te dragen aan het oplossen van sociale, complexe problemen. Voel jij je aangesproken door zo’n oproep?

Arwen: We zijn met het magazine wat we voor het stimuleringsfonds hebben gedaan, is een vertaling van alle onderzoeken die ook, binnen gezondheid zorg...

Matthijs: Ja dat was ook in de gezondheidszorg en de architectuur. Het zit een beetje hetzelfde als in de vraag voor dat congres.

Arwen: Kijk: je moet het zo zien dat de andere partij ons kiezen, omdat wij met die achtergrond bezig zijn en dat we daar een link mee hebben en een bepaald gevoel mee hebben. Dus op die manier word je als bureau zijnde ook geselecteerd om dat soort opdrachten dan te doen.
Interview Studio De Ronners

00:12:58
*Kelvin:* Mmm.

00:13:00
*Arwen:* Ja, en wij vinden het ook leuk om dat soort opdrachten te doen,

00:13:03
*Matthijs:* dus die thema’s, dat sluit ook wel bij aan bij onze interesses, maar het is niet zo dat wij heel snel met een open call, wat jij ook, deels op benoemde, dat doen wij niet heel snel als bureau – dat je een open call krijgt – en je moet daar een voorstel doen–.

00:13:20
*Kelvin:* Mmm.

00:13:23
*Matthijs:* Meer wel echt in, het moet wel echt een concrete opdracht.

00:13:28
*Kelvin:* Jullie profileren jullie proef ook echt als een soort. Naja, je zei dan net dat je echt zelf er wegzetten als een soort een bureau dat zich met name met zulke dingen bezighoudt. Daar profileren jullie jezelf ook echt op?

00:13:46
*Arwen:* Ja, nee, eigenlijk, ja, mensen kiezen je daar uiteindelijk voor maar of dat heel duidelijk profilering is. Niet echt. Ik denk dat dat meer is door de opdrachtgevers die de afgelopen jaren, want ons klantenbestand nu is, en de opdrachtgevers, dat die meer daardoor kleur geven aan die wij zijn.

00:14:09
*Matthijs:* Ja, en eigenlijk is het werk wat je maakt of zo, dat is ook wel weer de kleur wat...

00:14:18
*Arwen:* …wat voor identiteit wij hebben...

00:14:19
*Matthijs:* ...als bureau.

00:14:22
*Kelvin:* Ik vond het wel interessant omdat, kijk; je maakt een bewuste keuze door eigen initiatieven neer te zetten op de website als een echte speciale categorie.

00:14:32
*Arwen:* Ja.

00:14:33
*Kelvin:* Dat vond ik wel veelzeggend dat je toch dan, naja, toch ergens de behoefte hebt om dat of te laten zien, of dat de keuze is qua marketing, dat maakt niet uit, maar dat je dat laat zien aan de buitenwereld, van hé, “maar naast dat wij deze dingen doen, pakken wij onze eigen dingen op”.

00:14:53
*Arwen:* Dat vinden we ook interessant. Een tijd lang zijn we bezig geweest met een eigen destilleren label ja, vond dat gewoon interessant van die wereld te onderzoeken, wat gebeurt erin, het is een hele conservatieve wereld. En wat kun je daar als een soort experimenteel label wel iets in, ja voor elkaar kan krijgen? Dus ja, dan verzinnen we dat dan besteden daar heel veel tijd en energie in. Maar dat, dat levert ons ook weer heel veel andere inzichten op.
Kelvin: Ja, ja, dat is wel mooi. Werken jullie ook wel eens met derden” en dat is, misschien moeten we even toelichten. Normaal gezien krijg je een opdracht als ontwerper, en dat voer je uit en daar komt bijvoorbeeld een product uit. En dat is dan het eindproduct. Maar nu zijn er ook methodes, dat heet dan Co-design of participatory design methods, heet dat dan. Dat betekent eigenlijk dat in plaats van dat de opdrachtgever jou een opdracht geeft om een product maken. Is dat jij samen met de opdrachtgever aan het product zit en dat dan eigenlijk samen daarmee het product maakt. Dat je daarmee als ontwerper niet ontwerpt maar meer? Een ja, een evenement faciliteert, zeg maar daarin, het werkproces faciliteert. Gebeurt dat dan wel eens bij jullie, of betrekken jullie daar wel eens andere mensen bij?

Arwen: Nouja, wij faciliteren meer uit het gewoon hoe je met elkaar dat soort workshops doen... dat je tot de essentie komt van wie zij dan zijn. En met die ingrediënten...

Matthijs: Eigenlijk is dat een hele intensieve samenwerking dat we sowsieso hebben met de opdrachtgevers

Arwen: Maar nooit eigenlijk in een ontwerproces, in die zin dat het een Co-creatie of zo wordt.

Matthijs: Ja, je moet ook wel, Ja, schoenmaker, hou je bij een leest. De een die kan ontwerpen niet maar de ander niet. Dus ja, je wil wel die rollen toch wel duidelijk hebben, de één is wel de opdrachtgever en opdrachtnemer. Dus dat vinden we wel belangrijk, maar het is altijd wel een hele intensieve samenwerking met hoe projecten ja, of hoe we ontwerpen – en dat vinden we... De samenwerking is daarin heel belangrijk met een opdrachtgever. Omdat we daar juist heel veel input uithalen, en we vragen ze heel erg om...

Arwen: ...maar dat vragen dat doen we eigenlijk in het eerste proces. Vanuit de antwoorden die we daarop krijgen, Ja, gaan wij met die ingrediënten, gaan we eigenlijk aan het ontwerpen. Ja, dat is eigenlijk het meest intensieve, daarna vervolgens is ja, dat je mensen met elkaar tot een verdere invulling komt van een van een ontwerp of een opmaak van een boek of een tentoonstelling. Ja, dus in eerste instantie verzamelt je de ingrediënten, dan geven wij het vorm en vervolgens ga wel samen met de opdrachtgever de vorm met inhoud combineren. Je hebt daarin wel nog steeds die, de opdrachtgever nog altijd nodig om een soort verdiepingsslag te maken.

Kelvin: Mmm.

Arwen: En als die twee goed zijn, dan haal je dan, ja dan haal je ook het meeste uit een ontwerp en dan wordt het ontwerp ook alleen maar beter.

Second Section

Kelvin: Ik probeer al wat Matthijs zijn reactie, maar zou je openstaan voor zo’n proces. Om mensen daarin te betrekken in zo’n ontwerproces?
Interview Studio De Ronners

00:00:11
Arwen: Ja, maar dat heeft niet zoveel zin. Ik denk eerder dat ik, dat je dat… bij het product ziet, bijna...

00:00:24
Matthijs: Maar je doet wel co-creatie. Maar dat is dan met meerdere creatieveling. Niet zozeer met de opdrachtgever – want ja dat, ja ik, ik kan niet je opdrachtgever zeggen “ga mee ontwerpen”. Dat werkt niet.

00:00:39
Arwen: …Nee, het is meer misschien....

00:00:40
Matthijs: Maar je betrekt hem er wel bij. Bij het proces. Dus vertelt wel wat er gebeurt en wat te stappen zijn. Hoe je tot een ontwerp komt, maar het is niet zo dat je... en in het begin heb je dus wel een hele intensieve samenwerking, omdat je juist dan hé, ja, dan wil je weten van wat is de vraag en waar ligt het probleem en hoe kun je dat oplossen.

00:01:04
Kelvin: Maar dus dan...bij je eigen initiatief is het principe wel gebeurd - is wat ik zojuist hoorde is dat jullie... hé, die ruimtes, die leegstaande ruimtes, dat hebben jullie samengedaan met een groep creatieve mensen.

00:01:16
Matthijs: Ja ja ja, maar op die manier doen we het wel. En ook met andere opdrachten of wat dan ook, zoeken wij soms ook gewoon een team van mensen om ons heen. Dat we denken ja, we hebben juist iemand die heel goed is met videoregistraties, of coding of et. Cetera.

00:01:37
Arwen: Nou ja ook met dat distilleer label, hebben we een samenwerking aangegaan met een distilleerder en een brouwer. Dus ja, in die zin, zijn wij wel... Wij zijn meer, we doen meer altijd vaak, op die manier, de art directie en hebben de ideeën en op die manier werk je dat wel met een... kan je wel met verschillende partijen dat uitwerken. En de ene keer ja, voor ons eigen initiatief is het met een brouwer of een distilleerder. De andere keer is het, wat Matthijs net zei, juist iemand die heel goed in coderen is of in video, of ja, andere soorten toepassingen die je nodig hebt om tot een vorm te komen, ja.

00:02:26
Kelvin: Denk je dat je vooral een sociaal, sociale impact noem ik het maar even, vooral kan bereiken op lokaal of een meer groter niveau.

00:02:39
Matthijs: Dat hangt per opdracht af. Bijvoorbeeld, we hebben twee jaar geleden hebben we IABR gedaan. En dat heeft natuurlijk wel een heel ander schaalniveau, dat is de internationale architectuur biënnale in Rotterdam. En dat gaat het ook, ja dat is van internationaal podium. Dus, en dat, ja wij merkte dat ook hoe ons ontwerp, is dan ook, is opgepikt internationaal gezien, hoe we hebben gecommuniceerd over die probleemstelling van het IABR. Ja, dan merk je hoe dat...

00:03:15
Arwen: ...dan land...

00:03:16
Matthijs: ...land, en hoe dat wordt opgepikt, en dat je zo’n lastig thema, hoe je dat structureel kan neerzetten. Ja, dat, dat heeft heel veel opgeleverd, ook voor ons als studio.
Interview Studio De Ronners

Kelvin: Is dat, was dat toevallig het project waar jullie ook een award voor hadden gekregen?

Matthijs: Ja, ja.

Matthijs: Loc-D award is eigenlijk een hele belangrijke award omdat het gaat over dat je, dat is een, om ja, dat is een internationaal design counsel. Die ja, die geeft af en toe een prijs uit omdat ze denken van ja, jullie ontwerp heeft zoveel impact gehad en jullie hebben zo’n, met een bepaald thema zo’n, dat, of, op een bepaald thema, of een bepaald onderwerp, zo goed uitgebeeld...

Arwen: ...vertaalt...

Arwen: Naja we hadden het eigenlijk min of meer gekregen, omdat, een heel moeilijk thema, dat die toch op een hele duidelijke en...

Matthijs: ...positieve manier...

Arwen: ...positieve manier hebben weten te brengen. Dat was eigenlijk met dat IABR.

Arwen: Maar dat was ook wel eigenlijk wel ook een co-creatie met opdrachtgever, of co-creatie, maar dat was wel inhoudelijk, maar dan niet vormgeven maar meer op inhoud, dat je daar heel goed met een opdrachtgever hebt weten te sparren.

Matthijs: We moesten met twee, of wacht even, drie curatoren moesten we samen werken van de hele biënnale, met de, ja, directeur van de biënnale, en dat was wel eigenlijk een hele intensieve samenwerking.

Arwen: Maar dat heeft er wel toe geleid van wat je nu ziet. Dus dat het echt zo scherp en zo...

Matthijs: ...inhoudelijk klopt.

Arwen: Daar hebben zijn wel aan bijgedragen zeg maar.

Kelvin: Dus je zou eigenlijk kunnen stellen dat, ook door middel, door die intensieve samenwerking ook van, hé, door de directeur en door de curatoren dat het proces of dat de uitkomt, zeg ik, sterker geworden is.

Matthijs: Ja.

Arwen: Ja, ja, ja.
Matthijs: Ja zeker, ja.

00:05:42

Arwen: Maar dan zit er meer, dat je opdrachtgever, ons uitdaagt om nog meer die inhoudelijke stap nog beter te weten te vertalen. Daar zit dan de meeste triggers in.

00:06:00

Kelvin: Zoek je dat ook wel eens andersom op. Nu krijgt natuurlijk de input van, van de opdrachtgever, maar zou je ook kunnen kijken naar, naar de doelgroep en ga je wel eens met de doelgroep in gesprek om te kijken of dat…. en dat het de andere kant op werkt?

00:06:14

Arwen: Ja ja ja, nee, maar meestal…dat is eigenlijk onze rol ook, dat wij ook de opdrachtgever de spiegel voor houden.

00:06:21

Kelvin: Mmm.

00:06:24

Matthijs: Maar met doelgroep bedoel je de…t ‘publiek of?

00:06:29

Kelvin: Ja nee, het publiek, ja zeg, maar waar het product dan terecht komt. Wat het… hé het is dan van die doel, die kant input krijgt, omdat je daar misschien nog wat inzicht in kunt krijgen over weet ik veel wat.

00:06:40

Arwen: Ja, eigenlijk ja, dat toen wij eigenlijk niet. We zijn, we zijn niet dat we… wat we wel doen, we merken wel wat de impact is van een ontwerp, omdat het ja, dat is meer ook van hoe het wordt ontvangen.

00:06:52

Kelvin: Ja, en je zei net...

00:06:55

Arwen: (...?)

00:07:00

Kelvin: Je zei net spiegel voorhouden: ik kan me voorstellen dat als ik altijd een… kijk; ik voor mezelf wel vreselijk om mezelf in de webcam te zien naja, een spiegel voor... gehouden dat is niet altijd plezierig. Dan stuit je natuurlijk misschien een keer op een stukje, nou ja...

00:07:15

Arwen: Nou ja, een spiegel voorhouden is ook gewoon meer van hé, maar jullie vragen dit maar is het dan ook wel daadwerkelijk, ja, is daar daadwerkelijk behoefte aan? Of is er, zijn jullie dit wel, of hé, jullie zeggen wel dat je dit hebt opgeschreven, maar weet je wel zeker dat je het bent en uiteindelijk meer in een soort vraagstelling dat je daar met elkaar dan over hebt dan dat je echt, weet je, in zo’n zoals we nu praten, zoals praat je dan ook met een opdrachtgever. Van “ja, maar je zegt dit maar weet je wel zeker dat je hè, dat wil of dit wil zeggen of dat dit wil uitstralen. Zo moet je dat meer zien- “de spiegel voorhouden”

00:08:00

Matthijs: Ja kijk ze vragen je niet voor niks, z’n opdrachtgever. Dus ze willen juist een creatief bureau die juist naar hen kijkt en vanuit een ander oogpunt het kan beschouwen.
Interview Studio De Ronners

**Kelvin:** Je kan dan wel degelijk verandering in kunnen... dus de impact als ontwerper in die zin is natuurlijk wel groot.

00:08:26

**Matthijs:** Ja.

00:08:27

**Arwen:** Ja, maar niet, maar niet iedereen zit erop te wachten hoor.

00:08:31

**Kelvin:** Nee, nee

00:08:32

**Arwen:** Maar dat is meer, wij hebben meer probleem als we met een commerciële opdrachtgever om tafel zitten, die gewoon ja, een heel marketing, team of wat dan ook, achter zich hebben. Ja dat, je hebt, die hebben voor zichzelf altijd alles al helemaal zo ontzettend doorlopen van wie ze willen zijn, wat ze willen uitstralen, wat voor waardes ze er dan aan hangen. En ja, dat vinden we dan ook het moeilijkste om die daar soort verander slag aan te brengen. Maar bij de semioverheid en overheid, daar kun je eigenlijk wel daardoor veel meer mee.

00:09:14

**Kelvin:** Ja, ik snap ik ja.

00:09:17

**Arwen:** Maar wij worden meer ook gevraagd voor echt ja, bijzondere projecten vaak. We hebben wel, zoals “warmte stad” of wat dan ook, zijn wel hele grote branding projecten. Vaak zo’n... een congres of iets anders op die manier worden we vaker ook wel ingezet en dat vinden we ook het leukste eigenlijk om even te pieken en dan weer verder te gaan.

00:09:58

**Matthijs:** Ja en eigenlijk zijn dat projecten dat je echt bij nul begint dus er is nog niks en je je creëert.

00:10:03

**Arwen:** ...Ja dat is het ook...

00:10:05

**Arwen:** Vind het moeilijker om op iets door te gaan wat er ligt.

00:10:14

**Kelvin:** Het is al uitgezet natuurlijk en kun je...

00:10:16

**Arwen:** Ja, dan moet je eigenlijk doorgaan op het...

00:10:19

**Matthijs:** ...werk van een ander...

00:10:20

**Arwen:** ...van een ander waar dat eigenlijk ja niet echt bij ons past

00:10:25

**Kelvin:** Begrijp ik ja, wel interessant. Eens even kijken. Ik wil niet te veel tijd van jullie lunch afhalen, even kijken hoor. Aha misschien is dit wel een goeie: Waar zien jullie nog kansen voor sociaal bewuste ontwerpers. En naja of wat zou er moeten veranderen om die positie te kunnen verbeteren.
Interview Studio De Ronnaers

00:10:45
Arwen: Nou ja, ik denk dat het een zo’n creatieve industrie, die doet daar al heel veel mee om ontwerpers uit dagen, maar dan ook van drie, van 3D ontwerpers tot architecten, ja en ook, zitten er ook grafisch vormgevers bij die op die manier wel invulling weten te geven aan van bijvoorbeeld dementie, hoe ga je, hoe ga je daarmee om in van die tehuizen. Dus Ja, op zich wordt het best, wel gestimuleerd om... maar zelf...

00:11:27
Matthijs: Nou ja, wij zijn niet echt “social”... ja, je hebt ook echt de groep social designers – en dat is ja, dat zijn wij An sich – zijn we niet echt social designers. Is toch een andere groep designers hoor.

00:11:42
Arwen: Je ziet in ieder geval meestal veel in de fashion industri.

00:11:45
Kelvin: Mmm (Me rembembering my fashions courses).

00:11:46
Arwen: Modeontwerpers die juist heel erg bewust bezig zijn met materiaal en waar het wordt gemaakt of wat de herkomst is.

00:11:56
Matthijs: ja, dat zijn gewoon vragen die een (elke?) moet stellen vind ik. Ontwerpen van waar komt het vandaan en welke materialen kiezen je en hoe wordt het geproduceerd.

00:12:10
Arwen: Ja.

00:12:10
Matthijs: Dat is eigenlijk... en het gaat steeds meer spelen natuurlijk.

00:12:15
Kelvin: En dat merk je ook in je eigen praktijk?

00:12:17
Matthijs: Ja, tuurlijk ja.

00:12:19
Arwen: Merk je aan opdrachtgevers ook.

00:12:20
Kelvin: Ook van die commerciële richting?

00:12:26
Matthijs: Ja, ja, ja, omdat daar zit natuurlijk wel een beetje dat greenwashing in.

00:12:31
Kelvin: Ja.

00:12:33
Matthijs: Maar het speelt altijd en wij vinden het sowieso belangrijk. Om... ja, wat voor materiaal kies je, welke produceren, met welke produceren ga je samenwerken,

00:12:45
Matthijs: Dus het is uit eindelijk belangrijk wat je produceert, en heeft het product de impact die het moet hebben, of kun je het beter op een andere manier... Beetje zoals we het interview ook
Interview Studio De Ronners

begonnen.

00:12:55

*Kelvin:* Ja, ja, top! Hm. Nou, ik denk dat we meestal wel, wel gehad hebben. Misschien even heel kort, met name op wat je als laatste zei. Hebben jullie een project? Wat echt dat een beetje incorporeert dat jullie uw keuzes, echte bewuste keuzes hebben gemaakt over materiaal maar ook sociale keuzes hebben gemaakt, of communicatieve keuzes hebben gemaakt. Is er een project dat je zegt van naja dat schijnt hier wel echt door.

00:13:26

*Arwen:* Ja, dat is echt wel IABR is dat. Dat ging ook over de verandering die we met z’n allen aan moeten gaan, om de wereld te redden als ware. Dus we hebben eigenlijk die hele biënnale hebben we gekeken van “welke materialen ga je gebruiken, zijn ze duurzaam, kun je ze op een andere manier weer hergebruiken of... Zo zijn er van die doeken en stoffen van een banier zijn weer tasjes dingen gemaakt. Eigenlijk was dat het hele thema ook van de biënnale van, van de opbouw hadden wij dan met die materialisatie niet zo veel te maken, maar met houten panelen en zo, die hebben we weer, die hebben hun weg weer weten te vinden in hergebruik. Maar ja, wij hebben dan weer nagedacht hoe, hoe kunnen we dan, hoe heet het, onze materialen weer hergebruiken tot van die vlagen tot alle, alle dingen ja, daar zijn weer allemaal tasjes en andere dingen van gemaakt.

00:14:27

*Matthijs:* ja bijvoorbeeld in de tentoonstelling hebben dan juist voor materialen gekozen die juist goed te hergebruiken zijn of, of vooral met papier gewerkt die duurzamer is. Op die manier hebben we juist... dus eigenlijk dat hele project ging er ook over en dan het heel raar zijn, als je dan materialen kiest die dat niet zijn. Dus, en daar zie je ook ja, eigenlijk ook de hele impact die dan dat design heeft gehad op t ‘hele publiekelijke. Of de, het hele publiekelijke eigenlijk. Dus het had, het ontwerp had maar eigenlijk ook over nagedacht over het ontwerp en de materialen.

00:15:21

*Kelvin:* Ja gaaf top, want ik, naast dit interview, komt ook een visuele analyse in de thesis. Het zijn twee stukken eigenlijk en dan, dan zou ik, dan ga ik dan dit project uitlechten, omdat dan te analyseren. En ik denk dat dat dan een goed project is om dat te doen.

00:15:39

*Matthijs:* Ja is goed.
Due to technical limitations, the interview is divided into three parts which resets the
timestamps of the questions and answers.

First Section

00:00:03
*Kelvin:* Nou, ik wil eigenlijk gewoon wel even beginnen met de met de vraag: wat verstaat u
persoonlijk onder het begrip sociale verantwoordelijkheid als ontwerper?

00:00:12
*Petra:* Ja, sociale verantwoordelijkheid. Eigenlijk dat je je bewust bent van de wereld om je
heen. Da’s één dat je daar goed op acteert, en dat kan ik links of rechts dat je goed weet de
timing van de wereld waarin je leeft dus politiek en economisch moet je opmerkzaam op zijn.
En dat je dan kijkt naar een opdracht of een zelf geïnitieerd project, hoe dat in die tijd vergaat,
euh, ja, en dan heb je ook nog een keer, zoals wij, je eigen meningen en eigen projecten waarin
je dingen doet. En aan de andere kant heb je dan klanten die ook allerlei visies hebben. En je
moet dan ook bewustzijn met welke klant je wil werken. Dus Sociale verantwoordelijkheid
betekent eigenlijk een enerzijds bedrijfsmatig voor een hele grote groep, werk je met mensen
waarin je dezelfde visie toont en privé. Laat ik zeggen en professioneel met *(..)* kan je dan
eigenlijk ook een persoonlijke boodschap brengen, dus voor de klant zijn wij in een groter
geheel bezig in een groter... en in privé zijn we met wat minder *(..)* Dat is dus het gaat over
politiek, economie, tijd.

00:01:29
*Kelvin:* Goed verwoord en duidelijk, hm voel je enigszins verantwoordelijk is misschien....
En er zijn verschillende instituties in Nederland bijvoorbeeld het stimuleringsfonds voor de
Creatieve Industrie en Coöperatie van Cultuur.

00:01:43
*Petra:* Hum

00:01:44
*Kelvin:* En deze instanties, die hebben we eigenlijk min of meer door document, een oproep
gedaan aan ontwerpers is om mee te helpen aan oplossen van sociale problemen. Zou je, voel je
aangesproken door zo’n oproep.

00:02:01
*Petra:* Nee, ik denk echt sociale verantwoordelijkheid dat zit in je. Ik heb ik ben... sociaal
intrinsiek moet je gemotiveerd zijn anders kom je nergens. Sociale oplossingen. Op,
oplossingen, komen totaal niet door concepten. Het gaat erover dat je mensen dat je ontwerp
en ontwerpers kunnen daar rol spelen, maar die ontwerpers die dit doen, die doen dit al dan
dat zit dit in om oplossingsgericht sociaal werk en sociaal betekent en daarom zit je bij een
grafisch ontwerper om communicatie. Alles in het leven staat bij communicatie, als je niet goed
communiceert niks oplost.

00:02:45
*Kelvin:* Kun je dat verschil zeggen wat het verschil is dan tussen een onderwerp die het wel
heeft en een ontwerp die het niet heeft.
Petra: Je je je – het logisch dat jij niet bij grafisch ontwerper gekomen? Grafisch ontwerper is natuurlijk gewoon, ik ben afgestudeerd in de jaren 89 was ook een crisis, en dat vak van ons is een vak wat op een kunstacademie gegeven wordt, en het heeft een poëtische kant een handschrift kant en een narratieve kant, maar het heeft ook gewoon een maatschappelijke kant, omdat je dus altijd bezig bent geweest om de boodschappen te communiceren in de openbare ruimte, hetzij een brochure, hetzij een fiche, hetzij voor een hele groep, weet je dus daar zijn constant kantteken en een grafisch ontwerper dat vak is enorm verandert laat ik het zo zeggen. Ik ben analoog je niks aan analoog opgeleid, de computer heeft zijn intree gedaan en er is een soort revolutie gaande bezig met die computer. Een computer maakte veel meer templates, kwamen veel meer ontwerpers voor de templates, dus die grafisch ontwerper heeft ze die nu nog in het vak zit van mijn leeftijd op zich misschien wel zes keer opnieuw uit moeten vinden. De industrie eromheen ging failliet, de drukkers, de lithografen, de zetterijen, dus iedereen moest constant blijven schakelen. De commercie kwam op en dat betekent ook, en dan hoor je mij op scheppen, vroeger maakte je theaterraffiche samen met de regisseur over de inhoud van een stuk, op een gegeven moment is de in de jaren 90 is dat gewoon marketing bijgekomen, die dachten dat ze konden vormgeven en reclame kunnen. Dat zijn twee totaal verschillende vakken. Wij zijn altijd als grafisch ontwerper heel open geweest naar de wereld, dus hebben en voor de coca cola en de nike’s, voor de bakker om de hoek en ook het museum gewerkt, waardoor we altijd en visuele communicatie erin hebben zitten, een poëtisch, een aspect, het ontwikkelen van een handschrift, een ontwikkeling van een visie en ehm, daar zie je nu denk ik ook dat er veel ik op ja veel sociale projecten, het vaak grafisch ontwerpers zijn, omdat je vaak een spil in een grote netwerken bent, want een grafisch ontwerper is eigenlijk de storyteller. Dus als jij een boek voor het museum maakt, ben jij degene die het samen moet pakken, jij moet redactionele, de redactie maken of je bedenkt identiteit voor bedrijven, jij moet gaan nadenken wie is die man, wie is die vrouw, je moet, dus grafisch ontwerpers zijn gewoon eigenlijk van nature mensen die verbinden, die luisteren, die reflecteren en dus nog een bredere groep proberen een boodschap te vertellen. En als ze dan nog eens een keer heel goed zijn en hebben ze ook nog eens een keer aan mijn handschrift een visie en durven ze te praten als je dat allemaal optelt, dat eigenlijk hè. En ik vind het goed dat er een oproep komt natuurlijk al die dingen, maar projecten die sociaal zijn, zijn moeilijk, zijn moet je lange adem hebben, moet je veel passie hebben, je moet met mensen kunnen omgaan. Je moet communistes kunnen maken dat, dat is de meest moeilijk en ehm je moet geloven, hè, je moet lange lijnen durven denken. Je moet niet opgeven. en dat is eigenlijk het grote verschil met als jij bijvoorbeeld, kijk sociaal kan ook zijn, laat ik het zo zeggen – een robot ontwerpen en dat iets in de in de zorg beter kan. Maar dat is veel technische. Dat is een andere, een andere manier van ja, dat is voor mij ook niet echt sociale te zijn. Sociaal dat betekent eigenlijk humaan vind ik, dus het gaat voor mij echt over van mensen mensens...

Kelvin: ...mensens mensens

Petra: Dus sociale er zijn is voor mij niet de oplossing in de IC, IT of dat, dat dat het gaat over humanitair en dat, dat is voor mij eigenlijk heel veel wezenlijk. Dus, en ik snap wel goed, maar dat dat dat zit vaak al in de mensen zelf hè, die die doen en ehm, maar goed, ik vind het wel heel goed dat het gewoon opleiding komen waarin je gewoon de menselijke kant dat is... In ons vak zijn natuurlijk altijd in contact met mensen. Wij moeten dus je je, je leert daar enorm veel van en dat is ook heel leuk dat je heel breed, wij werken onze klanten bij studio-boot zijn heel het museum tot de bakker op de hoek, popconcerten. Iets heel erg leuk ook dat is gewoon een groot
avontuur. Ontmoet heel veel verschillende mensen.

00:07:26
Kelvin: Ja, dat voel je ook al als je hier binnenloopt natuurlijk, weet je. Het is gewoon een groot avontuur als je hier naar binnen al loopt. Dat is leuk ja, nee, serieus te zien en daarom vind ik het ook belangrijk om even daarnaast om elkaar te zien, gewoon belangrijk om zo'n studio reflecteert, zó veel zegt zo veel over hoe een ontwerper is en doet ja.

00:07:46
Petra: Mijn ontwerpproces, als je het goed doet, is opgenomen, het begin een beetje niet.

00:07:50
Kelvin: Ja, tuurlijk.

00:07:52
Petra: Gaat doen dan wat er uit gaat komen dat...

00:07:55
Kelvin: Ja, ja, daar ben ik het persoonlijk flink mee eens, waren altijd leukste gedeelte daarvan hoor een beetje sparren met elkaar altijd heerlijk, ja ehm. Ik vond het wel leuk dat je zo veel kracht eigenlijk aan de ontwerper geeft. Ehm in het in de literatuur die die vanuit de universiteit academische kringen van geschreven wordt, worden ontwerpers een beetje een proef die misschien net al een beetje wat ik net al zei, worden mensen ontwerpers, grafisch ontwerpers beetje weggezet als, de letterlijke termen die ze gebruiken was waarde toe voegers, ‘value adders’ dus, dan heb je je een lichtje van mensen. En dan de productontwerper het product. En dan heb je dan de mensen, je willen ze.

00:08:37
Petra: Dat dat is zo denigrerend, want ik kom heel erg op voor mijn vak gebied en al mijn studenten, grafisch ontwerpers zijn de spil van de samenleving, en in de toekomst zijn we daar van veel veel meer mensen voor nodig. Want hoeveel mensen langs de zijlijn, kunnen niet lezen, kunnen niet voelen, kunnen niet zien en als een grafisch ontwerper iets visueels kan maken op een andere manier waarin je kentering krijgt een passie, een boodschap letterlijk een boodschap kan lezen op een moment waarvan je denkt hé had ik niet verwacht hier, weet je, wat kun je dan betekenen veel en veel meer, dat is eigenlijk hetgeen als je nou ziet, kijk om je heen. We hebben op een gegeven moment in de jaren 90 is grafisch ontwerper is verzonken in de aarde. De commerciële jongens – en dat ging over push marketing maar verkopen, verkopen, verkopen. bullshit natuurlijk, want je kunt ook dingen mooi verkopen. en het gaat erover - en ik denk dat onze tijd dat dat nu gelukkig misschien wel aan gaan breken - En aan de andere kant heb je wou ik zeggen: de grafisch ontwerp verkopen. Andere kant is ook dat je – ik ben echt even kwijt, want inderdaad verkopen alsjeblieft mijn grafisch ontwerpen die die nu zeg maar ziet, want je moet ook niet laten gebruiken. Ik voel dat, we hebben daar altijd heel sterk gevoeld Edwin en ik. We hebben ook lesgegeven op design academy op design communications heet dat en toen hebben we daar hebben en grafisch ontwerper losgelaten, en dat heette communications visuele communicatie in de breedste zin van het woord. Dus dat wij met onze studio ook gedaan hebben in de jaren 90 begonnen, grafisch ontwerp, op een gegeven moment kwam er een kentering in hebben, zijn wij ook naar wij noemen dat nu tweeëneenhalf d, maar we zijn ook op een gegeven moment krijgen wij opdrachten in drie d interieur inrichting en alles wij richten ons eigen huis en mensen kwamen vaak dat je dat ook voor mij doen. Ja, maar dat kunnen we helemaal niet, maar het gaat er eigenlijk over kwamen we achter dat alles kan communiceren, dus ook wat jij zegt, dit voelt als een avontuur. Dus wij zijn ook interieurs gaan doen hele andere dingen, we houden van het experiment, dus je moet ook wel nieuwsgierig, nieuwsgierig
zijn naar de wereld om dingen anders doen. Dus wij doen nu ook public space, openbare ruimtes
dingen. Dat maakt het ook gewoon heel erg leuk, en daarmee kom je er ook achter dat, en daarin
heeft eigenlijk jouw school ongelijk, dat grafisch ontwerpers juist heel veel dingen kunnen
maken die communiceren en, maar ze krijgen de kans niet is wij zagen dat er een soort ribbeltjes
Edwin zegt dat altijd, je hebt in ons vak heb je een paar van die van die dingen hé je hebt dus
architectuur is één, die hebben een bedsrijfs plan is en dan heb je de product ontwerpers en
dan heb je nou en dan op een gegeven moment ga je productontwerpers eerst had je fotograaf,
maar fotograaf ondertussen ook door de democratisering van dat fototoestel ook bijna onderaan
beland. Nou en dan heb je mode dingen en dat is eigenlijk wat jij al zegt hé je heb bijna grafisch
ontwerper staat eindelijk één na laatste. Wie echt laatste staat zijn de illustratoren. En als je even
om denkt die je zou die dingen omdraaien, letterlijk dat rijtje wat jij nu maakt is op economisch
of op titels op een gebouw is groter en daar wordt met meer miljoenen gewerkt. Dus alles is
economisch geëngageerd, terwijl als je het even de schaal onderwijs pakt die illustrator die moet
van 70 euro voor vrij Nederland, een soort die krijgen vragen van geef eens vorm hem hoe de
wereld failliet gaat die krijgen de meest abstracte vragen.

00:12:27
Kelvin: Ja ja

00:12:29
Petra: Dat is het meest creatieve en het meest moeilijk wat er is, een handschrift hebben een
forum maken, een concept, een deadline voor een dag, geen budget weet je en ik vind dus dat
eigenlijk in heel de creatieve industrie is alles aan de euro gerelateerd en de mensen die het
hardste roepen het meeste vragen krijgen het meeste poen worden daar niet het gelukkigste van.

00:12:53
Kelvin: Het heet ook niet voor niets industrie hé

00:12:55
Petra: Daarom, maar je wordt daar niet de gelukkigste van. Dus het gaat over mooie dingen
maken dat is natuurlijk voor iedereen anders, maar wel dingen waarvan je gelukkig wordt als
ontwerper, en dat – en dat heet authentiek zijn. En dat is iets wat je wat ik ook mijn studenten
proberen mee te geven en dat wij heel sterk gedaan hebben altijd. Ik bedoel heel veel mensen
denken dat wij hier misschien met 20- 30 man zitten of zo nee wij zijn altijd met z’n tweeën met
één assistent gegeven, omdat wij niet de behoefte hebben om een hele grote industrie fabriek te
worden

00:13:30
Kelvin: Ja ja

00:13:31
Petra: Wij zetten nog steeds de koffie, heb ik net ook voor jou gedaan en we doen de
boekhouding, we doen de styling we doen alles hier en dat maakt het leuk, omdat je dan gewoon
leeft en daar maken veel mmm ja goed dan moet je wel weten wat je wilt natuurlijk, en dat
geluk hebben we dan allebei gehad dat je dan heel vroeg weet wat je wil dat je die lijnen....
Maar zoals wij zelf veel meer onderwerp mystiek wonen.

00:14:01
Kelvin: En hoe, hoe zorg je eigenlijk dat dat

00:14:07
Kelvin: Ja, dat fame of kader wat mensen hebben als een bedrijf die benaderd door jullie in zeg
maar hoe wachten dat is niet hoe te gaan doen om? Hoe? Of hoe ga je daarmee om.
Petra: Dat zie je toch? We hebben in ons leven nog nooit acquisitie … ik bedoel mensen komen alleen als ze ons gezien hebben. Wij hebben nog nooit zonder werk gezeten, nooit zonder onze klanten. Onze klanten hebben 27 jaar…!!

Kelvin: Dus je zou eigenlijk zeggen dat, dat mensen die hier komen toch al wel enigszins idee hebben hoe je hier het balletje rolt dat als je naar Studio Boot gaat.

Petra: Ze hebben werk gezien. Ze kennen niet Edwin en mij, en dan vaak klinkt het of klinkt het niet, maar loyaliteit vinden wij heel belangrijk, een familiegevoel, het is een community bouwen misschien die baan gewoon zorgen. Het samen het avontuur aangaan.

Kelvin: Ook bij de commerciële, meer commerciële.

Petra: Tuurlijk altijd!

Petra: Samen de avonturen aangaan, een mooi voorbeeld is – en dan denk ik om het te illustreren – is toen in de jaren 90 toen ik, wanneer was dat, 95-96, en die posters staan daarrachter een, één staat erachter linksboven maar staat Nike zie hè,

Kelvin: Oo, volgens mij ken ik die ja.

Petra: ja, je hebt dan in Nederland ook heel veel grote internationale reclamebureau in dit geval was dat (wide acedimy?) gerenommeerd, heel groot reclamebureau en het bureau van Nike – Nike zat in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam dat je dan Europees voetbal en die bureaus zijn allemaal gesplitst, en die wilde een campagne voor de WK, nee, de EK voetbal en 69 in Parijs, en die moesten een flyer campagne hebben - Dat ging eigenlijk over vijf posters, van zo klein sticker, mega billboards - en Edwin en Ik werden eigenlijk gevraagd, zeg maar, om ons werk te laten zien en wij hadden toen net een kind. Want we zijn een stel, die was drie maanden en toen op het laatste moment ging de oppas niet door of zo iets, en toen dacht ik: nou wat doen we? Naja, we moeten d’r meenemen kan niet anders. Meegenomen. Kom je in z’n heel groot bureau. Weet je wel, op de gracht en artdirectors, flinke klus, werk laten zien. Kom je daar binnen met een baby, dat is al niet zo...

Kelvin: Ja, de toon is gezet.

Petra: Ja, sorry oppas afgebeld, je excuseert je. Oké, prima, prima weet je wel. Kijk en zo was het in, in, in hoe het in die dagen ook ging, was van dat vaak teams. Freelanceteams, op die bureaus ging werken. Dus, ze hadden werk gezien. Nou ze waren helemaal: Leuk! En dit en dat en toen was het echt zo van: wanneer komen je hier werken? Toen zei ik, ja, dat gaat niet, want ik heb een baby, en ik heb borstvoeding, dat gaat niet! En het grappige was nee, we hadden die klus nog niet zo was het. Het grappige was dat, dat Jan begon een beetje, mijn oudste zoon heet Jan, die begon te (maakt baby geluid). We keken daarin en toen had Edwin
dus van die scotch tape, die ken je wel denk ik, had ie gewoon tape, en hij was helemaal blond, en blonde wenkbrauwen. En toen had ie twee tapes en had ie dus een zwarte wenkbrauwen zo omhoog getekend. Dus Jan lag daar een beetje te knipogen, te lachen in dat bakje, en toen zeiden die artdirectors daar: oh jullie hebben de klus, en wij komen naar jullie, weet je, dus het is omdraaien van je ding.

00:17:33
Kelvin: ja

00:17:33
Petra: Het is gewoon, en wat bleek: dat hele bureau is drie weken hier in den Bosch bij ons gewoon komen zitten.

00:17:39
Kelvin: Oh ja joh?

00:17:42
Petra: Ja, maar, weet je, daarvan heb ik ook, toen ik heel jong geleerd. Van ja, dit was nou, dit was toeval, dat het zo liep. Maar, dat, kijk dienstbaar is goed. Maar het moet in een – en dat dat is heel belangrijk – mensen denken dat grafisch ontwerpers alleen maar dienstbaar zijn. Dat is helemaal niet waar, en grafisch ontwerper heeft een visie, heeft een handschrift, heeft een mening en is dienstbaar aan het proces, maar niet aan de executie.

00:18:10
Kelvin: Wat gebeurt er als, als, misschien Nike of zo, hè, die hebben een goed groot marketingteam, en marketing zegt: hé we willen dit maar Studio Boot zegt: we doen dat. Wat gebeurt er dan?

00:18:20
Petra: Ja, discussie, Kijk, wij zullen nooit op vraag uitvoeren. En kijk, en dat is altijd een gevecht en dingen, maar veel van die klanten, wij vinden dat ook helemaal niet leuk. Wij haat, ik haat, haat de marketing, markteers verschrikkelijk! Weet je, hoe kun je nou in godsnaam een brand bouwen als je geen visie hebt en als je niet in jezelf gelooft? Hoe kun je in godsnaam een brand bouwen? Als je, als je het publiek de baas laat zijn, dan gaat het toch alleen maar om veel geld.

00:18:55
Kelvin: Ja, dat klopt.

00:18:56
Petra: Nou daar gaat het bij ons niet om.

00:18:59
Kelvin: Ja, ja sterk.

00:19:01
Petra: Weet je, je kan net zo veel verdienen met twee man als met 100 man. Ik heb alleen minder zorgen.

00:19:01
Kelvin: Ja.

00:19:10
Petra: Maar dat komt omdat wij nog steeds in die consumptiemaatschappij zitten, waarin het geld geregeerd.
Kelvin: Ja, nee, dat is ook wel zo dat. Ik zit even te denken na wat er allemaal... d’r is, het idee Creative Industries., het komt eigenlijk meer van een soort. Ja, een policy het beleid, komt eigenlijk uit Engeland, dat een tijd geleden waren, liepen daar fabrieken leeg. En toen hebben, de Engelse regering had het idee nou weet je wat? Laten we de, de, de, de creatieveling maar in die gebouwen zitten om daar... Nou ja, hebben ze een plek en misschien gebeurt er wat. En toen bleek dus dat het eigenlijk, ja min of meer, of dat nou bedoeld was, ja of nee, het bleek een schot in het roos te zijn, omdat dus die, die ja verwaarloosde gebieden kwamen creativlingen in, en dat dat hele gebied daaromheen dat ook, en dat dat verbeterde ook helemaal. De huizen prijzen die stegen. En dat zie je bijvoorbeeld ook in Nijmegen, daar heb je bijvoorbeeld de Honig fabriek.

Petra: Wij hebben hier het Werkwarenhuis hé, wij doen hetzelfde.

Kelvin: Oké! Ja!

Petra: Wij doen we daar ook een beetje creatief misdaad, want iedereen? Je bent je daarvan bewust, dus je, wij zijn ook met een groot project hier bezig Werkwarenhuis, heb je misschien...

Kelvin: Ja, ja, ik heb iets meer gelezen over Social Label

Petra: Werkwarenhuis is dus ook, daar is waar het Lab in zit, en daar doen we dus creatieve gebiedsontwikkeling, doen we ook. We hebben volgend jaar een nominatie van (Habitat?). En daar, daar stellen we het ook aan de kaak, weet je wel. Hoe kan het toch zijn dat die overwaarde nooit bij de creatieveling terechtkomt? Waarom verwacht iedereen, dat wij alles voor niks doen, en dat andere mensen daar... en daar gaat het weer over? Ook daarover, gaat het over de waarde die in euro stijgt. Wat wij willen aantonen is dat - we hebben hier in de gemeente den Bosch voor elkaar gekregen - dat we die ruimte tien jaar hebben.

Kelvin: Oh okay!

Petra: En wij doen het heel goed. We zijn een creatieve hotspot en noem maar op. En, maar ze willen ons beperken in de vrijheden. Voor ons is de vrijheid belangrijker dan het geld en creatieve industrie zou van mij dus ook naast die geld poot. Het behoud van vrijheid, ruim denken, zoals een poster activistisch, kan zijn op straat, heb je ook gebieden nodig waarin je vrij mag en voelen, en creatief kan zijn. Creatieve, je ziet ook hier (wijst naar altier) dit is, hier mag ik mijn eigen utopie bouwen. Ik richt het anders in, om creatief te zijn dan een reclamebureau of een advocatenkantoor.

Kelvin: Ja, voor sommige mensen is het heel lastig om, om naast alleen het geld dingen te denken, dat daarnaast geldt, ook andere waardes zijn, die andere mensen net zo belangrijk vinden of misschien wel belangrijker vinden. Dat is voor sommigen heel lastig

Petra: Ja, t’s lastig. Omdat dat gewoon niet in, omdat dat gewoon niet uit te drukken is in geld
nog steeds. Iedereen is op zoek naar een soort thermometer die daarnaast moet, maar dat, dat is bijna niet. Dat is heel moeilijk.

00:22:19

*Kelvin*: Het is net alsof je een andere soort taal spreekt dan, heb ik altijd het gevoel.

00:22:23

*Petra*: Dat is het hem. Dat is de moeilijkheid, en daardoor is die creatieve industrie een goeie tussenoplossing, omdat daar de taal van geld, hopelijk de andere waarde kan symboliseren. Dus dat is op zich wel heel goed.

00:22:37

*Kelvin*: Heeft u wel eens van het probleem van gentrificatie gehoord?

00:22:42

*Petra*: Ja, gentrificatie?

00:22:42

*Kelvin*: Ja, ja, ja, heeft u daar, heb je daar last van, of ook met, met, met het, met het Werkwarenhuis idee dan in het achterhoofd.

00:22:49

*Petra*: Nee, dat idee moet je loslaten. Je kunt niet vechten tegen een reus. Dus we zijn heel veel dingen aan het doen, en je kan het alleen aan de kaak stellen, op de agenda zetten, maar dat, dat, dat is. Ja, ja, weet je dan, dan is voor mij die, die, die, die, die vrijheid genereren of maken of die, die, dat veld maken is, is dan belangrijk - en door te geven aan jonge mensen - is belangrijker dan daarop te inen. Maar ik ben een stuk ouder, hè dus voor mij, voor ons, weet je wel, en daar zijn we een canvas aan het maken waar jongelui dat kunnen voelen, want het activisme, wij zijn, ik zit daar net in de jaren negentig afgestudeerd ook met de crisis. Dus daarnaast, weet je, je moet altijd, je moet doen, dingen doen, om je, niet om te overleven, maar om weg te maken – en je moet in je leven zelf de slingers ophangen – en dat betekent ook met je carrière – dat betekent ook als kunstenaar, ook als ontwerper moet je dus je eigen pad... Design your own life. Je moet je eigen pad maken.

00:24:00

*Kelvin*: Het in eigen handen nemen.

00:24:00

*Petra*: Ja,

00:24:03

*Kelvin*: kunt u misschien wat, dat Social Label, kunt u dat eens een beetje toelichten. Hoe is dat ontstaan? Waarom is dat ontstaan? Ik zeg gewoon, U zei net dat het een eigen initiatief was...

00:24:11

*Petra*: Ja, dat is. Ik heb altijd lesgegeven op de Design Acidemie, daar was ik mee gestopt naar 14 jaar of zo, en toen in 2011, crisis, was er een... Naja, de beurzen vielen om, de banken gingen failliet, d'r ging van alles ging er mis hé. Griekenland ging toen voor de eerste keer volgens mij bijna failliet. En toen was de hele wereld even van: Wat gebeurt er, hè dus we zitten nu weer in een soort andere crisis, maar toen was het ook z'n tijd, waardoor het wel heel eng was, want ik ging allemaal om de centen eigenlijk, en bezit. En toen hebben we, en ik heb altijd lesgegeven, dat vind ik eigenlijk heel erg fijn en ik dacht: ja, weet je, ik vind het wel fijn om een dag in de week, weet je, iets te doet waar, waar, waar ik ook interesse in heb. Toen hebben we dus een festival georganiseerd, dat heette het hutten festival, een festival waarin we de omkering hebben gedaan. En als je naar een festival gaat, hé, dan gaat het vaak over de podiumkunsten
en de muziek. Uiteindelijk komt die grafisch ontwerper, precies wat jij zegt: achteraan met een poster. En toen hebben we gezegd: nou, luister wij gaan een festival maken, wat gaan we doen? We gaan een, samenwerkend aan de toekomst bouwen. We pakken tien dagen. Ik heb heel veel mijn vrienden gevraagd en dan ga je, moet je nadenken van landschapskunstenaar, landschapsarchitect, binnenuisarchitect productontwerper, architect, Urbanistiek, grafisch ontwerp, nou alles bij elkaar, toen hebben we gezegd: oké, waar bestaat een drop uit? Een drop in de stad in de Spoorzone in Tilburg. Nou, een dorp bestaat uit een gemeenschap plek, een hotel, een gastverblijf, een werkplaats, we kwamen op tientwaalf dingen. Nou, we hebben heel veel hout verzameld van allemaal bouwbedrijven. Dat is op een werf op een hoop gegooid en tien ontwerpbureaus, architectenbureaus. Die hebben allemaal een functie gepakt en die hebben dus, we hebben gezegd: We gaan dus het festival, dus het bouwen An sich van die ruimtes, we gaan zeven dagen bouwen. Dus het is kijken naar bouwen. Dus het gaat erover dat, we die omkering hebben gedaan. Het gaat over dat we niet aan de achterkant zitten, maar aan de voorkant. Dus, oké, dan gaan we die huizen bouwen. En hoe gaan we de bouwen? En hoe zien we onze nieuwe samenleving? Het was 2011 hé. Ook iemand uitgenodigd uit Londen, die een socioloog, die ging dat een beetje bekijken.

00:26:52
Kelvin: Oh ja,

00:26:52
Petra: Open call naar de stad. In de stad, een plaatselijk architectenbureau, een theatergezelschap en heel leuk een werkplaats waar mensen met een heel laag IQ werken. Want ik had gezegd: als je eene, in Brabant is dat zo dat als je een vuurtje kan maken en een kippetje kan braadden, vroeger in de Peel zeg maar, dan kon je de grond claimen en dan was de grond van jou. Dus dat was de in steekt. Dus heel laagdrempelig kon je meedoen, dus we hadden iets van 14 dingen. Nou, we zijn zeven dagen gaan bouwen en de spoorzone, ben je daar ooit eens geweest in Tilburg?

00:27:28
Kelvin: Nee, Ik kom eigenlijk uit het oosten.

00:27:30
Petra: Precies, nouja, dat is heel, dat was helemaal, leeg en kaal. En nu heb je de LocHal, heel, heel, dat is helemaal ontwikkeld. Maar wij hebben daar dus zeven dagen gebouwd. Wij hebben bijvoorbeeld een jong ontwerper bureau uit, (...) Denemarken en we hadden bijvoorbeeld een jong collectief (…) Maar (de ontwerpers) uit Denemarken had dus de gentrificatie aangespeeld. Dus, dus we hadden, dus inderdaad in 2011 wel, die begonnen bijvoorbeeld, die hadden ‘de fabriek’, die begonnen met pallets. Dus van die pallets bouwende ze een fantastisch mooi bouwwerk, waren allemaal TU studenten.

00:28:08
Kelvin: Mhmm

00:28:09
Petra: Dag één, dag twee kwamen er al een paar wat pamfletten op. Dag drie kwam er dus graffiti. Dag vier ging de graffiti van de buitenkant naar binnen - werd het kunst. Graffiti werd kunst. Dag vijf, werd de kunst verkocht in een veiling. Dag Zes, werd de kunst weggehaald en werd dus helemaal opgeknapt het bouwwerk. Gentrificatie. Zeven dagen festival. Wat daar gebeurde, en dat was ook heel erg leuk, door die open-call is bijvoorbeeld dat de performance kunst, dus dans of bijvoorbeeld het zuidere toneel, die kwamen dus toen ook voor niks zich aanmelden van: mogen wij in jullie dorp spelen.

00:28:59
Interview Studio Boot

Kelvin: Oké.

Petra: Wat daar gebeurde is, ook even terug naar Social Label. Piet Hein, Piet Hein Eek. Piet had stoelen, of tafels gemaakt en dan en met een soort spanbanden. Wij hadden er allerlei communicatie, en die had ze weinig mensen. (Zoekt foto in boek). En dit was dan eindelijk een restaurant voor drie dagen, een pop-up restaurant helemaal in gericht en alles.

Kelvin: En dit was het dorp ook?

Petra: Nee dit dat alleen het restaurant, maar dit is de aanleiding van Social Label om dat de jongens met dat lagere IQ hebben, die jongens van Piet Hein geholpen en die voelden zich veilig in die community van tien dagen.

Second Section

Petra: En ik hoorde toen een werkplaats meester zeggen: oh, Piet Jan Eek, ja dan ontwerp, wat is dan ontwerp, ze wisten allemaal niet wat ontwerp was, wat design was, en ik hoorde hem zeggen van: oh wat hij kan, dat kunnen we ook, kunnen we die sloop meubels hé, kunnen we mooi na maken. En aangezien Piet een goede vriend van mij is zei ik van: náh dat kan niet, sorry, maar als jij gewoon iets gaat kopieren, waarom vraag je het niet gewoon? Ik bedoel, wij zijn heel open naar jullie, dan moet je ook open zijn naar ons. Dus toen heb ik aan Piet gevraagd: Goh zou jij iets willen werken voor die jongens met een laag IQ, want zij willen er graag bij horen, en zo is Social Label ontstaan, dus echt een daadwerkelijke vraag uit de maatschappij. Dus daarom ben ik ook heel erg tegen concepten, want weet je, je kan wel een concept achter je tafel verzinnen als ontwerper, maar als er geen noodzaak is, of je moet de noodzaak gaan onderzoeken en vinden, dan heeft het helemaal geen zin.

Kelvin: Klopt, dat is wel interessant want er is ook een, ja, dat is een methode in het ontwerpen van social design, is, het idee van co-design of co-creation, participatory design hé, dat je eigenlijk, dat het dan een methode is dat je met ja, dat jij niet degene bent, die ontwerpt, maar dat je eigenlijk met z’n allen het product maakt.

Petra: Ja, maar dat is natuurlijk ook bullshit ik, wij, doen verschillende dingen.

Kelvin: Mmm.

Petra: Het kan nooit een methode of een systeem zijn, want dat zijn, het zijn menselijke contacten. Dus, Edwin heeft iets gemaakt dat mensen met beperking en mensen met psychische problemen, en die waren heel blij dat de ontwerper iets deed met hun, maar op een andere manier. Hé een storytelling table werk, dus je moet je moet, en dat is dus Social Label, de basis van Social Label is, is gewoon dat je eigenlijk als ontwerper een leermeester bent. Je moet wel leiding nemen, je moet altijd de ‚artdirector in charge’ zijn van het eindproduct, Anders kan het dus nooit iets hoogstaands worden.

Petra: En je wil wel dat het, dat het, dat het iets waar de ontwerper trots op is en de groep.
Petra: Dus eigenlijk de ontwerper, wat wij doen met Social Label hé, staat puur in dienst in de humaniteit van de maker. Dus de ontwerper heeft de skills om na te denken wat de andere persoon nodig heeft. En maak dat op maat voor die persoon. Of maak het net iets hoger zodat we een soort leertraject, of leergierigheid of, andere dingen, ontspanning ofzo, weet je wel. Dus bij Social Label zitten dus, en daarom noemen wij deze stroming eigenlijk ook wel design met een betekenis, omdat je dus, dit gaat over productontwerp voor huiselijk dingen, dat je als, je bezem koopt, weet je ook dat je meedoet aan een stukje opleiding en een stukje, naja andere dingen. Alles is vooraf heel goed ontworpen waardoor iedereen z’n plekje kan doen en dan is het op maat. En co-creation, ik, ik zie, ik zie, en ook community art, daar ben ik ook een beetje... Ik vind wel dat, dat community art ook weet je wel, want dan maken ze iets en dan hangen ze het één dag op en dan is het weg. Het gaat over sociale duurzaamheid, het gaat over wat, dat als, als je er iets in stopt dat het erin blijf. Dus dat het geen projectjes zijn. Daarom is Social Label ook echt een beweging, een movement. Met een heel groot plan, ook van tien jaar, of langer, en mag zichzelf ook weer oplossen. Het gaat over een gedachtegoed, het gaat over een mindset die veranderd moet worden.

Kelvin: Zie je jezelf als ontwerper meer als een facilitator of, in die rol, of als een soort... in plaats van een mediator, dat je zegt van...

Petra: Nee ik zie mezelf als ontwerper. En ik zie me zelf als ontwerper in het voordoen van hoe het wel kan. Dus je moet de skills hebben. Dus en het kunnen uitleggen wat je bedoelt – en het doorgeven aan andere ontwerpers en het doorgeven aan het grote publiek, wat de kracht van design is. Dus de ontwerper in de hoofdrol zetten.

Kelvin: Ja.

Petra: En ik denk dat als, als, als, veel CEO’s en dingen, ontwerpers meer een dienst zouden nemen op beslissing functies, er hele andere dingen zouden gebeuren en daar zou de creatieve industrie voor moeten gaan, dus niet de ontwerpen als de uitvoerder, maar de ontwerper als de mede zegging schap in, in multidisciplinaire teams.

Kelvin: En dit – en dit gebeurt nu vooral dan, wat je, wat je zegt van Social Label, die kracht. Dan kom ik toch nog even terug op die commerciële setting. Die vrijheid is natuurlijk veel minder omdat zo te zeggen, omdat die marketingteams daar zitten. Hoe ga je daar dan mee om dit?

Petra: Dat is...eigenlijk... valt... dat eigenlijk wel mee moet ik je eerlijk zeggen. Zit even te kijken naar ons werk maar, ik denk eerlijk gezegd dat…. ja, ik denk even terug naar mijn klanten, maar eigenlijk de klanten die komen. Soms is het wel eens een gevecht onderraad, moet ik even na denken – dat is misschien, als bijvoorbeeld theater een bepaalde stukken wil verkopen, weet je wel, aan het grote publiek, en dat je dat wel eens een advertentie of een dingetje. Dus. Maar dan hebben we eindelijk de hele grote schil gemaakt. En ja, soms, dan weet
je ook wel, dat, dat sommige mensendingen moeten echt, moeten verkopen. Wat ik nu bespreek en over dit hele traject natuurlijk hebben we dan hè, helemaal geschreven over hoe het allemaal wel kan en dit, hè, en hoe het anders zou kunnen. Maar in de echte setting gebeurt het eigenlijk niet zo heel vaak wat wij ‘compromis’ noemen te sluiten, weet je wel, en wij zeggen ook aardig voor af tegen veel klanten dat wij gewoon, ja, eigenlijk niet zoveel van marketing houden, dus dan moet je ook niet bij ons zijn. We zijn wel eerlijk. Dus we lopen... aten we onszelf niet in die val lopen.

00:06:04

Kelvin: Dus het heeft ook wel een beetje mee te maken, je hebt, hè, je bent natuurlijk al een mooie lange tijd bezig. Je hebt in principe je gewoon geprofileerd als een bedrijf dat eigenwijs is en...

00:06:13

Petra: Ja, precies, je moet je goed profileren als ontwerper, anders krijg je de verkeerde opdrachten. Ik zeg tegen mijn alle studenten: de eerste twee jaar na je af studenten is echt relevant. Of de eerste twee jaar dat je gaat werken, dat je, dat je zuiver bent. Als jij te veel uitvoeren klussen aan gaat nemen, DTP, kom jij, en dan wordt het heel moeilijk om daarnaast nog iets anders doen. Dus ja, je moet er ook, dus hoe groot is de liefde en passie om iets te willen vertellen? Dus ja, dat geldt voor iedereen. Dat geldt ook voor beeldend kunstenaars dat geld ook voor de fotograaf. Ik bedoel als jij begint als fotograaf om alleen maar dingetjes in de studio op wit fotograferen, omdat je daar lekker geld mee verdient, en vrijstaand te maken. Ja, dan krijg je nooit die klus om...

00:06:56

Kelvin: Nee dat klopt, ja.

00:06:57

Petra: Dus, ja, het is maar hoe je, hoe je, je zelf wil, wil zien.

00:07:02

Kelvin: Nu speel ik even advocaat van de duivel. Maar wat als ik zeg: dat is wel een vrij romantisch beeld - is dat wel realistisch?

00:07:09

Petra: Dat is zeker realistisch.

00:07:11

Kelvin: Oké ja, dus, er is genoeg ruimte voor iedereen, voor elke ontwerper om dat te doen, Zo’n traject.

00:07:21

Petra: Nou, d’r studeren er wel ontzetten veel af, dus ik vraag me af in hoeverre iedereen echt zo passievol is als wij, dus wat dat betreft, mag daar wel een tandje minder, denk ik. Dat je echt gewoon de liefhebber overhoudt en dat geldt voor elk vak. Een goede econoom, een goede advocaten, een goeie... ik bedoel de beste advocaten, zijn ook de mensen die 80 uur in de week werken - doen wij ook! Werken is een hobby. Het gaat erover en dat zeg ik ook tegen iedereen: je moet er hard voor werken. Het komt niet zomaar. Ik bedoel, en door elk ding wat je doet, in elke fout die je maakt, leer je. Dus ja, dus, ja, wat dat betreft is dat gewoon niet makkelijk, zal ik het zo zeggen en het is niet romantisch, totaal niet. Het is hard werken.

00:08:04

Kelvin: Ja, dat is niet heel romantisch nee,
Petra: Maar de, snap je, dus ja weet je, maar wij hebben het nooit gezien als hard werken. We hebben het gezien als ja, ja toch heel erg, gewoon je, je nou, van je hobby, echt je beroep te maken en ik besef me ook wel dat niet iedereen dat lukt of kan. En dat je dan, nou goed waarschijnlijk hebben wij intuitief, onberekend, gewoon op het moment dat we dingen wilden doen afslagen gemaakt - ook nee gezegd tegen sommige klanten.

00:08:39
Kelvin: Aha, dat wou ik trouwens nog vragen.

00:08:40
Petra: Dus, dus, hmm ja, voelt niet zo goed, ja, waarom? Ja weet eigenlijk niet. Weet je wel. En we hebben ook wel eens een klus gehad in het verleden van; Jezus zeg, dat het meteen mislukte. Ja, oké, dat kan ook hé. Kan allemaal. Het is, ontwerpen is met mensen voor, weet je wel, dus moet ook gewoon moeten kunnen lopen, moet kunnen vloeien. Je moet elkaar kunnen begrijpen en moet elkaar vertrouwen, de klant moet jou vertrouwen, jij moet de klant vertrouwen, is echt heel veel met vertrouwd te maken.

00:09:09
Kelvin: Het community building dan, in principe toch?

00:09:11
Petra: Alles, ja, ik bedoel, het samenwerken is vertrouwen hé. Het is gewoon loyaal zijn en ook een keer zeggen: phoe, godsimikie zeg, dit heb je niet goed gedaan, dat was effe een misser en dan krijg je volgende keer wel die opdracht.

00:09:24
Kelvin: Ja, ja, die openheid is wel belangrijk denk ik ja.

00:09:26
Petra: Jazeker. Transparantie, openheid, ja, soms kijk en bij, ik zeg al: wij hebben daar, wij doen dingen vanuit passie een gevoel en ik heb daar geen wetenschappelijke rapporten onderliggen.

00:09:42
Kelvin: Nee, nee.

00:09:44
Petra: Wij zeggen ook tegen klanten; je kan bij ons komen, maar je kan, je kan dus niet vragen of dat we iets maken, dat er dan meer mensen moeten komen. Dat weten we niet.

00:09:51
Kelvin: Mmm, het is ook heel, de wereld is ook echt heel verschillend. Ik kom op de kunstacademie af, dat is het ene uiteinde en dan kom je nu naar de universiteit toe. Ik ben al onder de indruk dat er inderdaad, dat er een schema is, voor een heel jaar, dat ook echt van week tot week gevolgd wordt, heb ik nog nooit in mijn leven meegemaakt, niet op het MBO, vooral niet op de kunstacademie. Dus dat is al iets en dan lees je hoe er erover geschreven wordt en dan denk ik, ja, het is toch wel... het is soort zo strak en het is zo... alles wordt dan meteen een methode genoemd, een werkwijze en... naja laat ik het zo zeggen: plaats voor gevoel is er eigenlijk niet. Dat is niet een, het is allemaal berekend en het is allemaal eh. Ja, ik weet het niet, dat vind ik lastig. Vooral, ontwerp kan ik het nog enigszins een beetje voorstellen, maar vooral op het gebied van kunst, vind ik dat ook wel lastig. Dat zie je, vaak wordt, word gezegd van hé weet je wat: er is een kunstenaar en die gaat van a naar b. En er is een probleem, of hij wil iets maken, dus hij maakt dat en dat is dan een product, terwijl ik vooral, voornamelijk, gewoon begon en al werkende begon en, en dat hield eigenlijk niet op, dus er was eigenlijk allemaal geen B punt. Het gaat allemaal zo, maar dat zie je eigenlijk niet zo snel terug, tenminste, in de...
literatuur niet. Dus ik vind het wel leuk dat je, het ook eigenlijk ook zegt in, hé, dat is in mijn praktijk, of mijn ontwerp partijk, eigenlijk precies hetzelfde. Dus hé, het groeit organisch, en je hebt contact en je werkt uitvoerend zo...

00:11:26  

Petra: Precies, ja, je gaat wel naar B, maar je weet niet hoe, je weet dus het pad niet... kijk de wetenschap maakt een pad.

00:11:32  

Kelvin: Ja.

00:11:33  

Petra: En een ontwerpen niet. En dan heb je inderdaad nog wat jij zegt, je hebt verschillende ontwerpers, je wel ontwerpers die, die zijn flik in conceptmatig denken, hé, maar dat heeft misschien veel meer ook met industriële, hé, met product design, want je hebt parameters en dingen die je hebt, aantallen, je hebt natuurlijk wel dingen waar aan je soms moet voldoend. Ik moet ook een bij wijze een boek maken van een bepaalt grid, hé, je hebt allemaal parameters. Dus je hebt wel een A en een B, maar je kan, er is een proces denken, en in dat proces denken kan je andere afslagen nemen met die beter zijn. Maar het heeft ook te maken, wat ik al zei, en dat is iets dat je niet alle invloeden hebt. En dat betekent: tijd en de maatschappij om je heen, je doelgroep kan veranderen, dus je hebt heel veel parameters om het proces heen, die jou kunnen beïnvloeden. Dat heeft de wetenschap niet. Je houdt nergens rekening mee die hebben alleen de statistiek- dat is makkelijk! Lekker makkelijk – en dat is het grote verschil. Dat je dus, ja, de ontwerpers zijn, toch weet je wel, omdat je eigenlijk voor je klant ook het beste wil. Dus je moet ook marktonderzoek doen, hé. Als ik. Als ik nou eh, weet ik veel, een nieuwe klant. Ja, weet ik niet, waar ik nog nooit voor gewerkt heb zal ik toch moeten kijken wat gebeurd... van: wie is hij? Hoe ziet zijn wereld om zich uit? Wil hij zich misschien in Milaan presenteren of hij wil dit, of een museum, maakt niet uit, maar dan moet je gewoon even kijken. Wie zijn z’n Collega’s, wie zijn z’n concurrent. Hoe moeten het positioneel? Je moet gewoon heel veel onderzoeken. Dus ontwerpers zijn ook onderzoekers, en, maar, uit dat hele onderzoek, zal een ontwerper iets nieuws moeten maken. Een nieuwe lijn, een nieuw gezicht, een nieuw, nieuwe vorm, een nieuwe tijd.

00:13:27  

Kelvin: Nou volgens mij hebben we al heel wat besproken, even kijken hoor...

00:13:31  

Petra: Dus we hebben eigenlijk drie grote projecten hé, studio boot.

00:13:38  

Kelvin: Dat is je eigen...

00:13:41  

Petra: Ja, dat is Edwin en ik, dan Social Label, dat heb ik opgestart en dat doe ik dan nog met iemand samen en die komt er veel meer uit de cultuur, vanuit de andere kant. Dat is heel goed namelijk om multidisciplinair te denken.

00:13:51  

Kelvin: Ja, ik had ook over, er over nagedacht om haar te doen, maar zij is niet, zij is geen grafisch ontwerper

00:13:56  

Petra: nee, nee.
Interview Studio Boot

00:13:57
Kelvin: Nee, daarom.

00:13:57
Petra: Nee, dat is echt heel anders

00:13:58
Kelvin: Ja, het is meer een...

00:13:59
Petra: Ja, Simone heeft management gestudeerd en nee, en, en ik ben echt graag ontwerper en Edwin en ik, en vooral Edwin, het Werkwarenhuis komt nog veel dichterbij. Werkwarenhuis is, is dus, dan heb je het over die waard creatie Gentrifacatie, Werkwarenhuis. Wij hebben met studio, studio Boot de horeca, want je hebt dan een community plek toe bedeelt. Dus daar is Edwin mee begonnen. Dus het Werkwarenhuis is de plek en we hebben hier heel veel prijzen mee gewonnen en dit is ontwerpen. (Wijst in boek) Dit is echt gewoon dat hele pand hetzelfde als binnen, zit dus de shop in, zit het lab in...

00:14:43
Kelvin: Oh ja, en hier zit het Social Label ook in?

00:14:46
Petra: Ja

00:14:46
Kelvin: Ah, oké, want dat kon ik even niet...

00:14:47
Petra: Ja dat zit hierin. Nou ja, kijk dit was het en dit hebben we gemaakt, maar dit ontwerpen wij. Dus, we bouwen ook wel, dus wij zijn echt ontwerpers. Dus wat we hier doen is gewoon voorleven hoe je anders kan bouwen, anders kan doen, en dat aan beleid mensen en andere mensen dan laten zien, en dat is gentrifaction, en dat, dat is ook wel jammer, want niet iedereen ziet daar de waarde van. Tot op het moment dat (er werkjes verschijnen?)

00:15:10
Kelvin: Ja.

00:15:11
Petra: Dit is de bubbel dus, dus, dit is wat Edwin ook heel erg...

00:15:15
Kelvin: Dit is toch fantastisch.

00:15:16
Petra: Ja het is megagroot, Maxima heeft het geopend, dus dit is eigenlijk, als je het dan echt... Dit noemen we eigenlijk ook wel een tien jaar ontwerpend onderzoek. Heel groot, heel breed ingezet, waarin Social Label gedachtegoed, een movement is over heel Nederland met 17 van mijn... die hetzelfde als dat huttenfestival, je weet wel, collega’s, en waarin ik dus eindelijk de ontwerper heeft, gewoon hoofdrol hé. Als ontwerpers maken we dan de wereld? Dus, dus daarin laten we zien dat het wel allemaal anders kan, zonder daar iets voor, voor, snap je? Terug te hoeven.

00:15:54
Kelvin: Ja, ja.
Petra: Want dat blijft nog steeds ondergeschikt. Dat jij, je zegt net over grafisch ontwerpen, en, en, en nu in het algemeen, als je nu heel even naar deze crisis kijkt is, ook de hele culturele sector. En als ik nu heel even snel terugkijk nu in Brabant, hebben ze een nieuw partijbestuur met VVD en Forum (voor Democratie).

Kelvin: Forum, Ja.

Petra: En die hebben gewoon de portefeuille (gedeputeerde) cultuur, hadden ze onder vrijtijd geschikt, en ze hebben het gewoon geschrapt. Dus in de toekomst, Creatieve industrie, is echt van belang dat, dat die opkomen, neem dan hier in Brabant hebben wij natuurlijk de Dutch Design Week, hebben we zo ontzettend veel goede instellingen, zo ontzettend goed. Brabant is echt een provincie van doeners, hè, dus niet alleen concerten, maar echt doen voorleven, doen, maken, en Design zit bijna wel in een soort, creatieve industrie, in een tweede bloedlijn eigenlijk. Veel meer dan misschien nog wel andere provincies in heel Nederland breed gedragen dan door de provincie. En dan is het echt pijnlijk om te zien, dat dat door, dat dat niet gezien wordt. En we hopen niet dat dat een voorloper is voor de landelijke overheid natuurlijk.

Kelvin: Ja, ik zag het – ik was ook blij verrast, moet ik zeggen. Toen ik hier kwam wonen in den Bosch twee jaar geleden, hoeveel culturele evenementen in den Bosch als stad zijnde organiseerde. D'r was...Ik heb m'n ogen uitgekeken.

Petra: Elke week!

Kelvin: Elke week was er wel iets. Ze vaarden met bootjes door de, door de grachten hier heen met Jeroen Bosch dingen, en toen was een opera, Ik denk wauw - ik heb dat nog nooit gezien, nooit zo heftig. Zo vaak, zoveel, zoveel dingen. Tramkade alles heb je hier zitten.

Petra: Dat is op de tramkade he, het Werkwarenhuis. We hebben nu dat het (fun?) park dingen allemaal geschilderd, dus, de Tramkade is dus inderdaad ook, dat hebben we nu vijf jaar onderweg, en dat is, en dat hebben we het zeven jaar geleden geïnitieerd.

Kelvin: En toen, was er toen al wat?

Petra: nee, helemaal niks

Kelvin: Dus jullie zijn eigenlijk de eerste...

Petra: Wij zijn de ontwikkelaars. Het was één grote puinhoop. Dus nadat het huttenfestival in 2011, heb ik een brief geschreven naar de gemeente, Van Tien Dagen Naar Tien Jaar, daarom hebben wij, en omdat, omdat ze het niet wil te ontwikkelen, wilde zij een invulling, en toen heb ik gezegd: nou, als jullie ons tien jaar geven, dan kunnen wij onze visie van een nieuwe samenleving daarin gaan vormgeven.
00:18:29

Petra: Ja, ja.

00:18:30

Petra: Dus van niets iets maken is het credo. En hier staat ook een heel, krijg je dit boek wel van mij, er staat een heel stuk in van Gentrificatie (...). Het gaat over die waar creatie. Alles zit erin, in ieder geval een heleboel dus, en, en ja, maar meest belangrijke is gewoon Play. Vrijheid is belangrijker dan... en, en gewoon de, de, het respect wat eigenlijk mensen die in de creatieve industrie werken zouden moeten krijgen. En dat is nu (een vraagstuk?)

00:19:06

Kelvin: Mmm.

00:19:06

Petra: En dat is nu...Dat is natuurlijk wel goed van de creatieve industrie, want daar zit ook festival onder of... weet je wel, er gaat veel geld in om.

00:19:14

Kelvin: Ja, jazeker.

00:19:16

Petra: En dat wordt nog niet helemaal gezien als serieus. Dat doet denk ik iedereen, dat doet iedereen een beetje pijn.

00:19:24

Kelvin: Nou, ik denk dat ik zulke initiatieven – dat is natuurlijk wel – heeft de creatieve industrie wel op de kaart gezet, in dat opzicht. Dus ik denk wel dat het heel belangrijk is geweest en dat daar ook... naja wat jij ook al zegt, dat is een mooi middenstuk, omdat je daar een brug in kan maken waar je vrijheid voor jezelf als ontwerper kan creëren en tegelijkertijd toch een beetje de economische kan daarvan kan bevredigen. Andere mensen, ook.

00:19:50

Petra: Ja en hopelijk ook dat het gewoon... weet je wel. Dit is eigenlijk een heel groot concept of een outlet waar je in kan staan. Je wordt onderdeel, dus je kan ook, en dit is heel mooi Edwin die... we hadden die ruimte, en heeft ie dus in één keer helemaal roze gespoten vijf jaar geleden, en toen kwam, dat weet ik nog wel, de directeur...

00:20:11

Petra: (laat foto’s in een boek zien)

00:20:12

Petra: ...en de directeur die kwam en die zei: Oh wat een mooie verbouwing! (Lacht) Toen moesten we lachen. Toen zeiden wel al van: náh kijk maar, de kracht van, van design. (Bladert in boek).

00:20:28

Petra: Maar dat zijn leuke... en weet je, en dat doet ons goed. Dat soort opmerkingen, dar is hartverwarmend. Dat we dan echt denken: góh, dat we dat hebben kunnen bereiken alleen met de kleur roze, weet je wel, dat iemand denkt dat wij daar gewoon mega... dus dat, dat kunnen creatieven.

00:20:44

Petra: Zo was het (laat foto van Tramkade zien).

00:20:45

Kelvin: oké, ja.
Petra: In 2015, Zo. En een dag later was zo, helemaal roze, gewoon helemaal. (Frank van aken) hé,

Kelvin: ach ja, En je kunt hier zo in

Petra: Ja, we zijn gesloten nou met Corona

Kelvin: Oké, oké.

Petra: Vanaf één juni gaat het weer open.

Kelvin: dan weet je, dan loop ik een keer naar binnen. Ik heb dat nog nooit gezien joh, Dat is echt zonde. Daar moet ik een keertje heen.

Petra: Heb je dat nog nooit gezien?

Kelvin: Nee, ik kom niet zo vaak... Ik zit natuurlijk in Nijmegen, dus eigenlijk mijn, mijn, mijn leven. In den Bosch bestaat uit: van de Graafseweg waar ik dan woon, fiets ik naar het station. En dan ga ik naar Nijmegen en ik werk dan ook als bijbaantje op het station. Dus in principe is mijn leven naar het station toe fietsen dus – en ik heb ik heb een vriendin. Ze studeert aan de akv, st Joost. Daar kom ik ook nog wel een keer, dus ik fietsen er wel eens voorbij, en ik weet het aan de hand is, maar ik heb nooit echt tijd om naar toe te gaan.

Petra: Naja goed, vanaf één juni, of juli ofzo, is het terras open dus moet je er dan maar heen gaan. Kijk en dit wordt wel eens tegen mij gezegd van: Als het hier over Social Label gaat, van dat ik een verbinder ben. Nee! Nee, ik ben ontwerper, ik heb daar gewoon heel, dat is mijn vak. Ik geef er les in, ik ontwerp zelf wel, Ik heb heel het boek gemaakt, ik heb alle foto’s gemaakt, ben grafisch ontwerper, ben de editor, desamensteller, alles doe je. En doordat je het zelf doet, kan je het ook communiceren. Dus, dus dat is eigenlijk gewoon belangrijk. En daar zit mijn wil rol, weet je wel. Edwin is de tekenaar, ik ben de fotograaf, en zo hebben wij eigenlijk altijd gewoon een hele goede samenwerking gehad. Edwin is nu een heel leuk project aan het opstarten - even terug grafisch ontwerp. Deze. (Laat twee poster op een tafel zien) Die hangen door de stad (?) School in huis dus is wat voor soort deze? Waarom?) Het zijn vier grafisch ontwerpbureaus en allemaal oud studenten. ...()...

Petra: Ja.
Interview Studio Boot

00:24:02
Kelvin: En er zijn zoveel, er zijn zoveel mensen om je heen, en er is drukte op de arbeidsmarkt.

00:24:08
Petra: Ja je moet het zelf doen.

00:24:10
Kelvin: Ja hè, dus je moet eigenlijk, dus wat jij zegt: je moet niet te bang zijn om dingen te kiezen.

00:24:12
Petra: Nee je moet vooral niet om je heen kijken. Dat is echt slechtste. Daarom is social media ook gewoon slecht voor jonge mensen.

00:24:18
Kelvin: Mmm.

00:24:19
Petra: Je ziet te veel, moet je niet doen.

00:24:22
Kelvin: Nee, ja, kan ik me iets bij voorstellen ja,

00:24:24

00:24:46
Kelvin: Ja.

00:24:46
Petra: Dus eigenlijk vind ik ook als je op een kunstacademie zit of, ja dus toch met die hele social media, en je moet die bubbel van vijf jaar voor jezelf zien te nemen, om jezelf te ontdekken wie je bent, wat je graag wil doen. Maar wel hard werken om, om de tools, of de grafiek of, te specialiseren, wel te experimenteren en trial-and-error hè, we proberen de dingen te bouwen en te maken.

00:25:15
Kelvin: Ja.

00:25:16
Petra: En nu wordt, wordt in deze tijd – en dat vind ik wel jammer – dat veel grafisch ontwerpers – en daar heb ik zelf dan wel moeite mee is dat door social media betekent dat mensen van journalistiek erop zitten. Mensen voor marketing, media, fotografen, en grafisch ontwerpers worden eigenlijk allemaal richting die social media geduwd. Maar dat, dat zijn allemaal verschillende visies, dus een Instagram communicatieplan, zeg maar, zal ook door al de tijd mensen anders worden gedaan.

00:25:51
Kelvin: ja, klopt.

00:25:52
Petra: Maar als het serieuzer wordt genomen, dan is het dan, op den duur...weet je wel, en ik vind het ook wel jammer dat daar nu weer al die commercials tussendoor komen. Maar ja, ik
denk wel dat je dus, dus je, ja goed moet kijken, communicatiemiddel bij welke doelgroep past en voor je studie, voor jonge mensen om te leren, moet je vooral niet te veel rondkijken. Ik ben niet zo vaak, vaak van dat je veel musea moet bezoeken. Dat boeit je toch helemaal niet? Gaat toch gewoon over wat er in jou zit? Gaat helemaal niet over wat je allemaal gezien hebt...

00:26:27

Kelvin: Ja.

00:26:29

Petra: Dus dat, dat, dan moet je gewoon niet willen

00:26:34

Kelvin: Ik herken ik hier zo zoveel van mijn... deze overtuiging is mijn vriendin namelijk ook. Die is, naja die is dan fotograaf en die heeft een afschuwelijke hekel aan die sociale media, die hele atmosfeer daar ook over. Het gewoon het idee dat iedereen, het idee dat iedereen maar fotograaf is, dat idee, dat is, het is ook heel democratierend. En of dat altijd goed, ja, oké. Maar zij heeft er echt een, een diep gevoel voor (..), ze doet dan ook aan analoge fotografie, veel in de doka’s, dat is nu helemaal vreselijk want die doka’s zijn nu niet beschikbaar en ze kan niet te ontwikkelen en dat soort dingen meer. Maar ze leeft daar ook echt voor, en die heeft ook eigenlijk die, die kijkt ook nooit naar andere mensen,

00:27:14

Petra: Nee dat hoeft ook niet

00:27:15

Kelvin: En nu, nu, heeft dat, ze doet dan nu ook een master visual culture – is het volgens mij – en die vraagt van haar dan om ja, een, een arbeidsplan of ja, hoe zeg je dat? Een, een profiel op te zetten, zulke dingen meer, en dat zal vast allemaal wel goed zijn, alleen dan wordt daar haar gevraagd: Nou, wie is dan je, je beeld/taalgroep mededingen, en wat kun je daarvan leren? Waarom moet ik dat weten? Wat, wat heb ik daaraan?

00:27:44


00:28:20

Kelvin: Ja, dat heeft, denk ik dan, te maken met een sterke profilering hé. Wat je in, je maakt zelf een authentieke handtekening, wat jij ook hebt, ja, zeker.

00:28:27

Petra: Ja, en, weet je, de keuze van je klant en de keuze van je dingen, dat gaat na je beroepspraktijk, moet je dat allemaal doen. Je moet niet, je moet niet zo stellig zijn van: Ik ga me nooit commercie werken. Wij hebben heel veel voor commercie gewerkt. Soms was het wel eens zo, we hebben het zelf ook heel erg leuk gevonden om in de mode te werken, omdat de mode zo op de tijd zit modeontwerpers, en shows, houden van muziek, en zitten gewoon in het engagement van de wereld. En dat is heel leuk en, en, en die hadden dus omdat er, omdat het (...) hé, een paar keer per jaar mocht je op de (...) en die werd meestal weer vergeten. En dan gingen ze weer naar de volgende. Kijk als kunstenaar is het misschien zo dat je denkt, ik wil dat unieke ding en die moet dan aan de muur hangen for ever. En dat had de mode, is dan wat luchtiger.
Kelvin: Ja, snel cyclus en dan...

Petra: snellere cyclus in die zin om dingen te maken. Maar Ja, dat is nu ook natuurlijk helemaal veranderd of andere dingen, maar mode- mensen zijn wel dan, dan, dan leeft het wel, weet je wel, dan zit er wel, dan ga je ook hé, want wij hebben die nachtclub gebouwd, hè, nachtclub van (aken?) tot vier uur. Ik, ik hou ga ook nog wel eens, nou nu niet meer, maar ik ben wel, we zijn wel eens met z’n tweeën, ik bedoel dan zijn we wel de oudste daar, maar naar een goede hiphop versie geweest en de mensen zijn, we zeggen ook wel eens de drempel is van 18 tot en met 70 jaar zeg maar. En dat zijn gewoon de free spirits, die gewoon aangehaakt willen zijn. Toch, die underground is nodig voor al die werelden, weet je wel, die en dat is eigenlijk daar.

Third Section

Petra: Toen we dat project daar ook om, dat canvas voor deze stad, wat toch een rare stad is, dat canvas gewoon zo breed mogelijk te houden eigenlijk. En ja, studietijd is toch wel echt nodig om gewoon je ‘ik’ te kunnen vinden, vooral in de visuele kunsten.

Kelvin: Ja, klopt. We zeggen ook altijd dat je, dat je, dat je, vooral in bachelor vrije kunsten dat je tijd koopt in principe. Je koopt niet een studie pad zoals als je economie studeert of boekhouding, en je gaat deze dingen doorheen, je koopt gewoon tijd en die tijd heb je ook echt nodig om jezelf te...

Petra: Maar wel tijd met, het is wel een serieus vak, weet je wel, zoals Bergman en die dingen hé. Dus, het is wel een, die grafiek. Het is, het is ook een craft.

Kelvin: Oh ja, jazeker, jazeker,

Petra: Snap je? Dus het is, Dus het is, de beste kunstenaars hebben ook gewoon de handen om het te maken. Dus je moet investeren in het maken, dus je bent ook een doener, dus je moet, net als jouw vriendin, die moet zoveel uren in de doka draaien om te weten wat ze nou precies eruit wil halen.

Kelvin: Ja.

Petra: En wat haar dan, haar (...) is, weet je wel. Dan is het kijken voor de lens. Maar het is ook kijken hoe het uit het bakje komt en wat je daar dan mee kan. Ja, en hoe groot je het doet en hoe je het communiceert of hoe je het ophangt.

Kelvin: Ja, welke papiertjes je gebruikt.

Petra: Ja, al die dingen. Dus die matrialiserling, en die staat natuurlijk er voor gevoel, voor hoe mensen het voelen of oppikken. Dus het is niet alleen tijd, het is ook arts and crafts. Dus het is,
Het is het is, ook heel ambachtelijk en net zo ambachtelijk als de timmerman of de loodgieter, elektricien.

**Kelvin:** Mmm, maar met die tijd bedoel ik ook echt van nou; dat te doen, weet je, Om echt het... het mooiste voorbeeld vind ik daar wel van, kijk je creativiteit gebeurt niets van hé, kom we gaan nu creatief zijn. Meestal, kan best zijn dat je twee dagen – en ik denk van nou weet, je weet ik veel, en dat je dan toch later in die week zegt: oké, weet je, ik gaat dit doen en dat gebeurt dan niet om negen uur dat je op school komt. Nee, hé de academie, die hebben langere tijden, nou bij ons liep het heel iets anders omdat regels, maar vroeger was dat 24/7 uur open. En dan kom je gewoon op school als het 11 uur was, want je wou dat even gaan doen. Dat is jammer dat, dat nu allemaal iets meer gelimiteerde is. Maar, weet je, in die opzicht heb je gewoon je tijd en nu komt dan de echte wereld eraan en je moet bezighouden met nou ja, je moet jezelf opstellen, naar buiten gaan, dus je moet wel een beetje, kijk, niemand gaat naar je... zomaar belt jou op zonder u dat je... als ik niet weet wie Petra is, zou ik Petra ook niet opbellen. Hè dus je moet wel, je moet je naar buiten opstellen. Hoe stel je dan op? En je moet, je moet je boekhouding ook doen in die zin. Dus daar komt veel meer serieus... en dan is die tijd wordt gewoon kleiner om dat te doen. Dus ik denk dat zulke opleidingen gigantisch belangrijk zijn daarin.

**Petra:** Ja, na ja, het gaat uiteindelijk over dat een, dan komen we even terug op ‘sociaal’

**Kelvin:** Mmm.

**Petra:** Voor mij is het meer het woord ‘humaniteit’. Het gaat over dat je dus de aandacht die je krijgt, het één op één, dat die gericht is op jou. Dus ook op een kunstacademie, en daar gaan we even terug naar lesgegeven. Waar het over gaat is dat elk persoon uniek is en dus dat je moet kijken wat er in die persoon is en wat daar de authenticiteit van kan zijn. Of hé, als je student bent – en dat is wat je dus, dat is het talent wat je naar boven haalt. En met het talent ga je; A, die passie ontwikkelen en je drive, en je geld verdienen, zo moet zijn.

**Kelvin:** Het is misschien niet heel relevant voor het... maar al authenticiteit. Daar bedoel je niet mee uniek, ofwel?

**Petra:** Ja, je moet wel een niet handschrift hebben. Ook in de creatieve industrie snap je?

**Kelvin:** Nou, hoe ja, ja, maar hoe je werkt dat dan met het idee dat je niet, dat je eigenlijk niet iets uniek kan maken, want eigenlijk is alles al wel gedaan?

**Petra:** Maar jij doet het weer op je eigen manier!

**Kelvin:** Oké

**Petra:** Dus dan is het weer nieuw. Als ik, ik bedoel als ik geen koffiepot meer mag ontwerpen als ontwerper, ja, sorry, jij zou hem anders maken dan ik.
Kelvin: Ja.

Petra: En als je te veel koffiepotjes volgt op Insta(gram)... dat is wat er gebeurd

Kelvin: Dan blijft het koffiepotje altijd een koffiepotje.

Petra: Dus en dat heeft te maken dat je dus dan heel hard moet werken aan je persoonlijk skills en handtekeningen en aan je visie, maar dat je dus ja, Ja, mensen zeggen nog wel eens: nog een stoel? Nog een stoel, ja weet je, ik zeg, hé, van mij mag je nog een stoel ontwerpen. Ik vind dus wel dat het niet meer in die oude economie moet gebeuren van veel stoelen en alleen maar met de functie ‘zitten’. Ik vind gewoon dat je wel een stoel mag ontwerpen, maar dan moet die stoel aan een paar voorwaarden voldoen. Hij moet vind ik, als ik dan even vanuit het concept van Social Label denk, hij moet dus gewoon sociaal gemaakt zijn, dus dan moet er een opleiding... er moeten arts and crafts in zitten, hij moet goed ontworpen zijn, dat sowieso, betaalbaar zijn. Moet misschien wel lokaal geproduceerd zijn, we gaan hem niet helemaal ergens weghalen uit China, weet je wel. Dat gaat hier ook over de kwaliteit. Nou, ja, ik wil wel investeren, dan is die misschien wel iets duurder. Arbeid kost meer geld hier in Nederland, maar dan ga ik dan voor. Dat betekent niet dat je dat niet meer mag doen. Soms zeggen ze ja, weet je wel, te veel consumentisme dingen, t mag allemaal niet meer. Nee, ik vind dat nog steeds allemaal mag, alleen we moeten er wel over nadenken: wat is duurzaam, maar vooral sociaal duurzaam. Daar wil ik wel meer voor pleiten.

Kelvin: Ja, ja, mooi statement denk ik toch zo? Dan nog even een afrondende vraag stellen, even met het oog op de toekomst ook. Nou ja, wat zouden moeten veranderen om de positie van de sociaal verantwoordelijk ontwerper te verbeteren?

Petra: Ja gewoon veel meer awareness bij het grote publiek.

Kelvin: En wie moet dat dan aankaarten?

Petra: Iedereen, ik bedoel... A, overheden moeten ontwerpers gewoon serieus nemen. Dus als echt vakgebied. Dus dat wat je nu al gaande ziet. Dus creatieve Industrie is die niet alleen industrie, dat is een beroepsgroep van mensen die gewoon serieus hun vak beoefenen, het zijn geen kunstenaars. Haal het uit het woord kunstenaars. Kunstenaars heeft een – en ik zeg altijd toegepaste kunst, altijd. Kunst toegepast in de samenleving, dus voor (benefits, op sociaal of maar?). Dus het is, het is toegepast. Dat zijn ontwerpers, toegepaste kunstenaars. Kunstenaar, daar is, is natuurlijk, die hebben best wel een probleem, omdat, omdat er is ren reflectie, en ik vind het ook wel. Ik vind dat kunstenaars ook hun verantwoordelijkheid hebben, niet alleen maar in het museum hangen en niet alleen maar... Dus wat, wat doe je daarmee? Weet je wel, wat, wat wil je reflecteren als ware. Hé kunstenaars zijn eigenlijk de fotografen van vroeger. Dus je wil iets aan de kaak stellen, dus die moeten ook veel meer in die actie, actiematig... interactie, dus, dan moet. Het kan niet alleen maar een craft zijn vind ik. In deze tijd leven we niet meer zo. Plus, de wereld is zo veranderd. Vroeger was het dat je, dat je, gewoon niet kon reizen en dat je daardoor een andere wereld kon zien door een bloemenveld. Nu is de wereld echt veranderd, dus daar moet op... daar moet, dus dat verandert, en dat vind ik ook wel... onze taak als ontwerper is natuurlijk wel gewoon de dingen beter maken. Maar hoe doe je
dat? Weet je wel, dus in die zin, terugkomend op jouw dingen, hebben ontwerpers dus wel een verantwoordelijkheid. Je kan niet, maar dat vind ik trouwens bij kunstenaars ook, iedereen, je kan niet... we weten nu ook dat de wereld, als we zo doorgaan dat het niet goed gaat komen. Dus we moeten allemaal wel, gewoon ons inlezen. We moeten wel studeren. Moeten dus...  inderdaad, als het dan gaat over politiek, economie, Sociaal, je moet op de hoogte zijn. Je moet op de hoogte zijn wat er in de maatschappij speelt en niet op de hoogte zijn wat je collega’s doen, daar hadden we over met je vriendin.

00:08:29
**Kelvin:** Ja, ja, de trend volgen en zulke dingen.

00:08:33
**Petra:** Nee! Dat moet je niet doen. Want dan, dan ben je, dus, je moet, je moet als ontwerper midden in de maatschappij durven te staan. En voor, de breedte durven te zien. Want anders kun je gewoon niet de goede afslagen nemen.

00:08:48
**Petra:** (...) 

00:08:52
**Kelvin:** Prachtig, zullen we hier afsluiten?
Due to technical limitations, the interview is divided into two parts which resets the timestamps of the questions and answers.

**First Section**

00:00:01

*Kelvin:* So, I just wanted to start off with a short question, and that is, could you explain what the term socially responsible design means to you personally? As a brand designer?

00:00:18

*Bernhard:* I think when you look at true design, it always has been about the human. I think it always has been focused on the usage by the human being. So therefore, I think all design in itself is socialized. Where I’m focusing on is not particular the material aspect of design, but the immaterial aspect of design. So, like the systems which we are living together with. They also have been planned or if you want to call it ‘designed’. They have been made in a specific way so that they help us now to work in practice and society. And what I, what for me, the social design especially, is, is to work on these systems. To support the systems with tools to support the systems with new ideas or to question existing strategies for certain systems so that we can improve them. It’s like, if you compare it to something more grasppable, like an app development, you have a specific app in which you offer us a service. And by reviewing the functionality of this service, you can create updates. You can create maintenance of the system or you can implement new functions. And this is kind of what I’m interested in doing, systems which we have in our daily lives.

00:01:51

*Kelvin:* Would you would you classify yourself as a designer, still or...

00:01:55

*Bernhard:* Yeah? I think so actually, I had that a lot while graduating. I started doing that, when I graduated, I started to look into that. (...) And a lot of my professors were also saying that, are you going into politics now? Why would you act as a designer? And that’s, I think, a bit the difference why I see myself. I don’t see myself of advertising these solutions or trying to convince people that it’s possible. I’m more trying to create them so that they function well. (...) For me, politicians in that sense, they... they always have a huge lobby behind them or a huge amount of people behind them, which are experts giving them the right information. And I don’t see myself in the front of getting this information, but I’m more seeing, like, the development of this information for in that particular sense, not politicians, but people who would like to see change in... or socially innovation in that sense.

00:03:01

*Kelvin:* Oh, that’s great. And now a little bit more focusing on the idea of the word ‘responsible’. To what extent do you feel a response? Why do you feel responsible for that? or do you feel responsible for that?

00:03:15

*Bernhard:* It’s a... I’m wondering if I... I certainly feel responsible in some sense. I am wondering. Why I feel responsible, though, that I think I also don’t have an answer for myself. I do think that. Throughout the development of my career, I saw the possibility of what I can do
and how I can help people. And maybe that’s more related to something, a personal experience that I had in Austria when we still had to go to the army in Austria for six months. And I was a paramedic there. So, like, you have for the training, you have, you have the possibility to go one month with the Red Cross in the ambulance car to help the people who are now, (who have just their travel?), and need medical care. And I think that was one moment which gave me personally a lot of input on, like, how I can help other people. And when I started doing social design, I saw the possibilities of what can be done to help people who live in poverty, help people who just struggle with this system, which works well for most of society, but not for them. So, kind of like that. That feeling was for recreate back there. And, and it gave me kind of like the motivation to start feeling responsible.

Kelvin: Yeah, that’s very clear. So just for my idea, how old are you exactly?

Bernhard: I am, wait, 28, and will turn 29 soon.

Kelvin: Do they still have military service then in Austria? The mandatory...

Bernhard: Ya!

Kelvin: Oh, really? I didn’t know that, that’s kind of intense...

Bernhard: It’s odd because in a sense, of course, for a lot of people, it gives them structure. It gives them discipline

Kelvin: True yeah

Bernhard: The problem is, if you’re further away from that, when you’re like you already have plans for the future. Like I always knew I wanted to study. So, I had to, I had to stay for six months in a military service, even though I wanted to go away and study design. So, like, its kind of, it’s, it feels like six months waiting for, you know, going on with your life. It was an interesting experience.

Kelvin: Yeah! I bet...okay. Sorry that was just an order...

Bernhard: (laughs)

Kelvin: hmm... as you know, there are different institutions in the Netherlands, for example, the Dutch Council for Culture or the creative, stimulation fund for the creative industry. And they, in difference of reports and documents, they kind of made it call. They called upon designers to contribute as much as possible to help solving complex social problems. Do you feel addressed by this call, by these institutions?

Bernhard: I don’t know if I feel addressed by the creative industry who shouts for creating social innovation or is to address these issues because I think it’s the wrong party to call.
Interview Foundation We Are

Kelvin: Oh,

Bernhard: I think it is the governments who needs to really open up their mind and say like, hey, look, we have this problem in society. Let’s solve it. I think it’s positive that the cultural industry does it because it will influence the idea of the ministries of... municipalities to actually take action because it becomes an example. But personally, I don’t feel addressed by that. No, because I think that I’m always... I’m never really looking into. Well, that’s not true. I’m mostly not looking into the creative industries I’m mostly looking into like international relations. What is happening there? What is happening in politics? How can I find that, the topic which I want to work on. So that’s why I think that their call is maybe... Never...past by me?

Kelvin: Yeah, yeah... It’s also, it is also not really a direct goal. Like he, we put out a call for an assignment. It’s not an open call to send in. It’s more... throughout the documentations or the report of last year. They see an increase of these things and they see possibilities of that. And they want to, they want to stimulate these relations between the government and the designers. Could you maybe elaborate on Foundation We Are. That’s very interesting. Could you maybe highlight its mission, how it came to be, why it is there in the first place?

Bernhard: Now, Foundation We Are started with a project called We Are Human Rights Project. And that project...when did it come up... I think it came up already in 2016... I’ve tried to get it done. In 2016 I met a group of human rights defenders in The Hague. And I had a wonderful day, I presented my work. I chatted with them, and I saw the issues which you’re going through, which I was like, how can I help them? I really like to support them. And that was issues such as, like, if they... Their faces are made in connection with the human rights issue, which they would be working on, they would be killed, for example, because in some countries it’s just not even seen as a crime. But it’s still something where physical violence will be acted upon. And at that moment, I felt like, well, how can design actually help them? And back then, I had the idea, of starting idea, of what if we represent their physical face with a product, with a poster, with something which allows them to become anonymous to protect the person. And is this maybe the role of design which it can take? So, with that first thought, I found an organization called Justice and Peace who then helped me to set up the project. And I searched for seven designers who want to work together with me to establish this project. And while developing this project, at one point, we saw that the best possibility to go forward is to become an organization which represents the designers, which we want to be and questions society with the right questions to see where can we develop new strategies, where can we implement new things. So, we started. Yeah, we started the foundation with the eight of us as an experiment for ourselves as well to find out even where can we take action. And its constant development process of meetings where we come together and see where we should take actions, which projects do relate to us. And the reason for it. So, I think that’s the, more where we are going to, is in the beginning, it was an experiment ground for ourselves. Have kind of that the idea to support designers, to work on societal issues. And what we see now more and more is that it can become an entity of quite flexible collective where you join in and you. You’ve become a part of some bigger entity which can support you to work on these issues because a single designer, it’s very difficult.

Kelvin: Okay.

Bernhard: At least in my experience, like with this ecocide project, with which I graduated, my
troubles there back then was that, for example, the one of the NGOs I worked with, the director wanted to have the traffic, which comes in from the campaign. And therefore, he was kind of like trying to force me to take off all my online data, on my, on my website and everything online and put it on their websites so that the traffic would go through their website and they could in the end have more visitors direct to their organization. Which brings me in a conflict of interest because I didn’t make a campaign for their organization, I made a campaign for (...) the law?). And their we couldn’t find out how to work together because the director saw me as not an equal party because he saw like he is a young designer who has no idea of the world and didn’t bring enough respect towards me, for example. And what I saw, but I saw with the foundation very clearly is that the interesting part of it is that as soon as you approach... if you go somewhere and you say, oh, I’m the director of a foundation or I’m a chairman of the foundation. Everybody takes you seriously.

Kelvin: Yeah, it lends credibility to your position in that sense.

Bernhard: If the foundation sends an e-mail to somebody, everybody takes it serious because the foundation and it’s it gives this illusion, in some countries, of a lot of money or in some countries of like political power. So, it’s very interesting to use this, this communication strategy as foundation and how it can actually support designers to be seen as the stronger entity.

Kelvin: Yeah, that’s very interesting.

Bernhard: And so, like with that, with that contact, trying to use their communication. We are now starting more and more to clarify how the foundation can become really a part for designers who wants to work on political topics, humanitarian topics, environmental topics, of course, big one, but also, for example, what can civic society do and the development of technology. What is the role in our society there? These kind of, these things we saw that we can actively supports the designers with the foundation. That’s what we wanted to do and will develop to do with it actually.

Kelvin: Yeah, great. Great. On the website, you write, or not you write but the foundation writes, that you tried to achieve. Well, you want to use design in order to transform social and legal system? This is what you write. And then you also later on your write that you try to achieve this by working with client based or self initiated projects. And I was curious, could you elaborate a little bit this dynamic between...because I’m really very interested in how these well, these social goals that you set for yourself. How do you work in more commercial setting? You already told me a little bit that you had run into troubles when you graduated with that project, I am very interested in that. Could you say something about that.

Bernhard: Yeah, that is actually one of the things which I think as a social designer is the most tricky thing you will have, because that problems you work on are not momentarily. They are a continuous process which needs to be guided and changed. And it’s more difficult in the social design thing than, for example, the product design area, because you can finish a product that it can be produced and put out to the market where you as a designer don’t particularly have an influence on it.

Kelvin: Exactly
Bernhard: In the social design front. That’s what you will have, is a system of people who work together who continuously change. And therefore, that process actually needs to be way longer. And in our experience now, what we had so far was and, there I’m speaking more about projects which are from maybe the individual studios because the foundation, of course, doesn’t have such a base of client base. What I see in my studio, for example, is that they’re really beautiful projects. They get developed together with their organizations, but their clients and kind of contractor-based relationship is a hurdle for it. Because a client, contractor-based relationship has a beginning and an end.

Kelvin: Yeah.

Bernhard: And there needs to be the deliverable of this ‘tool’, which is supposed to solve a societal problem. Which is absolutely naive and quite an illusion that one design will solve that societal problem because the societal problem changes. So that’s... something we do work with clients. But we always try to have more a partnership relation. To see how... good we have this issue now, how can we work together on a longer term, like to not have these momentarily developing or creative workshops where there in the end, you think like: “all these ideas are great, but what’s going to happen with them? Who’s going to implement them?” And I think on client base situations, this can, this process needs to go on till the project itself starts to life. So, when it gets its own head where somebody (thinks for?) on it, then you as a designer slowly can step out. And that actually has never happened to me so far. That’s this full process was a step was established, unfortunately, but I’m trying to work towards this also with the foundation. Because, at the moment, it’s most of the times the traditional thinking of client and contractor this ‘beginning and an end’, the ‘deliverable’ this ‘finishing it’ and also the money aspect, because it’s, it’s funny that for technical innovations such as apps, for example, there’s a lot of money to update and to maintain. It’s not so much money or the winning of like kind of financing they’re maintaining and updating of our societal system. It’s more like, oh, it has to happen once. And then we did something and then it has been solved. So that’s like... It’s a tricky part. But the client-based ones are usually organizations who approach us who... or who I meet through networking things or who I actively approach also and say like, hey, do you want to work together on the issue which you’re working on, for example. Now with we’ve tried to create a partnership with them and the other part of the project, which we do with self initiated ones...the interesting part about this is when you meet designers, you also kind of talk with each other of what is happening in the world, what is happening in each others practice, and what issues are interesting these days? So, where we as a group just sometimes say, like, oh, I would actually like to do something about this. Then we reflect on what can be a project. (...) who wants to work on an issue. For example, we thought it was a pity to not do anything about the Brexit. So, because the Brexit was supposed to be originally in Dutch Design Week. So, I thought it would be nice to just give a gesture. But we as a group really were against this protesting of like, oh, like don’t leave. And everybody was just angry of people leaving. So, we thought, well, there is a whole other group of people who we actually want to support from a positivity approach then. And that was the remaining European parliamentarians, actually, for all the European parliamentarians which were back then still in office. So, what we did this kind, of we, we thought that these... so we had 51 parliamentarians are actually designers of Europe for the next four years. And so, from a designer to a designer we wanted to write them a letter. So, we wrote him a letter to just wished him a good luck with the design project Europe. And kind of spread positivity in that sense to tell them that there are also people who believe that they do great work or that at least we hope that they will do great work and that it will work towards a more united Europe and not to separate the two.
Interview Foundation We Are

00:20:56

Kelvin: Yes...

00:20:56

Bernhard: So indeed, these kinds of projects are then self-initiated because there is no client base for this. There is also, there can be afterwards maybe people who are interested in supporting it. But it’s really like these moments where you say, I want to do something about it, but I don’t have a client. I don’t really have the money. So, we always trying to see if there is a project like this. People bring it in. And then we started ourselves.

00:21:25

Kelvin: Yeah, great. What was the name of that project again? Because I saw it on the website...

00:21:30

Bernhard: Letter to Europe.

00:21:31

Kelvin: OK. Yeah,

00:21:31

Bernhard: It is not on the website because the website is currently being completely rebuilt because it wasn’t updated in a year or two.

00:21:37

Kelvin: Oh, OK. I believe I saw it somewhere because...

00:21:41

Bernhard: Let’s see to believe it’s definitely on the Dutch Design Week page from us.

00:21:51

Kelvin: oh OK. That maybe... Oh well ok, great. OK, well you already said it a little bit. But when you work in a commercial setting or this client base setting, then the structure, the power structure is a little bit different. And it’s funny because throughout the literature that I’ve read for this thesis, they refer to especially, well to the traditional idea of the graphic designer as a ‘value adder’ in a process where you have the marketing teams and then all the way to the end you have the graphic designer. And that is quite different than a product designer who, well, he owns the product. So, when he says, OK, you know, we need to think more, more social for our product. He can make direct changes to the product. And as a graphic designer, you are a little bit behind that process. And I was interested in how do you feel? Do you have enough influence in, in such a structure, in such a power relation with a client-based assignment?

00:23:19

Bernhard: Usually I demand it.

00:23:20

Kelvin: OK.

00:23:20

Bernhard: Personally, I always say, I don’t want to be in the end of this... like, if I’m involved in the end of the whole process, I cannot change anything anymore. And I cannot do my job. So, if people approach me and say, like, oh, well, we have all these things done and we need you to make it pretty. That’s something like that. Sorry, that that’s what I’m doing as a designer. I am not sugar coating your idea. And that’s also, that’s also partly why I stopped going further into the industrial design area.
Interview Foundation We Are

*Kelvin:* Okay!

*Bernhard:* Because it became for me a bit, at least in the education, I mean, I never worked as an industrial designer. But in the education, it really ruined it for me because it became very much sugar coating on old ideas to make it marketable. So that you generate a new coffee machine with a new... one function with a new look, a new colour, and you learn the strategies of how to sell it to a client. And I was really like, yeah that’s not what I want to do with my life, because what I want to do it is to be before the process and see why things that happen... why can we not just remodel the existing coffee machines? Why do we have to produce new ones? These are the things which I would like to think about. But often it’s not given. So that’s why what I do is if somebody approaches me with a question, I usually know that there is already some process behind it which has happened. And so, I am reinvestigating this question and see if it is really the right thing, which we have to work on. To go back into that process of where they have been. And that’s the first step, which I always tell them, look, I’m going to start with the research in like, why are you bringing this question to me? Because I mean, I need to have the information you have, and I need to be sure that what we are doing doesn’t end up in an app. Because that’s the easiest solution to the problem.

*Kelvin:* Well, then that implies also that you... that implies two things. One, you have rejected some projects for the sake of well, it’s not. It’s not benefiting the greater good or my goal. And two is that you are making really, well, that you are making graphic or communicative choices in order to achieve these social goals.

*Bernhard:* I mean, I don’t think that every project which comes my way, I would be able to do. To be honest. There are some people who are better in somethings then me. So, of course, I could do then. But for me, more interesting is than OK. Can I add an aspect to this project? And ask somebody else to do to work together with me. Like, I think this individualism of like I can do everything, and I am going to do everything, would also not make you happy. Because in the end, you’re the happier about projects where you can fully have given where you’re good at. And if the project doesn’t suit you. Somebody asked me to design, to design, I don’t know, a table, of course I can do it. But I am definitely not the best furniture designer. So, I would rather work together with furniture designer and see what my aspects as social designer are in there than designing the furniture for example.

*Kelvin:* I have a question here. I’ve written it down like this: “how do you include that piece of social responsibility in the daily commercial assignments?” Now, I’m not sure it is completely fitting to your practice, because what I’m feeling here is that you make sure that the daily commercial assignments always include the social. So, you’re, you’re already profiling or you’re already filtering your clients, so to speak. You already put that in so that when they come to you. They already know. OK, Bernhard, he is there for the social and not for other stuff, sugar coating stuff.

*Bernhard:* Yeah. Or make them aware of that the sugar coating is not the right approach.

*Kelvin:* OK?
very good question of like, how would you, for example, if Victoria’s Secret comes to you, says, like, how would you approach a project like this?

00:28:14

Kelvin: Yeah,

00:28:14

Bernhard: Something, a massive company which is mostly orientated to commercial and, for example, Victoria’s Secret has a huge societal issue problem because they are portraying the image of beauty for women...

00:28:29

Kelvin: True

00:28:30

Bernhard: ...in a very specific way. But it doesn’t reflect society. And my approach, that if they come to me and say, like, oh, can you make an ad campaign? I will most likely not design a campaign, but I will design the structure of content underneath it. So, like, what are the aspects where we can and truly reflect society and research this of how we can help organizations which are maybe bigger to take their social responsibility? So, in that sense, but also, for example, Shell comes to me and says, like, oh, can you make a campaign for us? Then I would be questioning, am I really making a campaign for them where they truly want to change or are, we going to greenwash their content.

00:29:16

Kelvin: Yeah,

00:29:16

Bernhard: They do have to be as well as a selective, I think, because otherwise you don’t stay true to your core values.

00:29:22

Kelvin: OK. But now I’m going to ask a tricky question, but you seem then to have a very strong moral compass. You said you want to be selective or sometimes you need to be selective. But you also need to keep the company going. You know, you need to have food. You need to have. Well, it’s your living, right. So how do you make choices then? How do you keep up with that?

Second Section

00:00:00

Bernhard: That is very interesting because actually I did financially worse when I didn’t stay true to my values.

00:00:04

Kelvin: Oh really?

00:00:04

Bernhard: Ya, because... I did any project in the beginning. I had a client, which was one of my first clients, which is super happy to have it. And he asked me to design a toy, what was it a children’s toy, a children’s toys in China...
Bernhard: And I was super happy that somebody asked me to do a project. But what ended up is that I spent so much time on projects, which I was not happy with. And I didn’t want to continue on. That the projects which actually had potential to make me financially stable. I didn’t spend enough time on them. So, what I learned now is that, like, if you look at where is really your passion and where can you really add something it really wants to work on? You also can create a financial model around this which will allow you to be this stable. And that’s something, with the creative sector is very interesting because a lot of people are still in the approach, in my opinion, at least still in the approach of like everything which comes in I’m going to work on it. Because if somebody gets asked to do a huge graphic design campaign with a lot of money, but it’s not a graphic designer, it sounds great, but you have to also be aware of, like, are you going to be really happy of doing it or are you more happy on doing the research and give the graphic design to another person? So, I don’t know. I my experience I have no more financial possibilities, which might also, of course, because for a time. But I have now more possibilities of how I’m going to shape my business with the idea I have what I’m working on than before.

Kelvin: OK, well, it’s very interesting

Bernhard: Because I think one important part there is that you can actively market towards people who you want to work with. If I know that I want to work on social issues, then I can approach companies to organizations which work on these social issues. I think that’s something which you can’t do when you just say, like, I’m going design. Because design is so broad.

Kelvin: Yeah that’s true, well I believe it also, it also taps a little bit into fear that, you know, the market is pretty overcrowded. There are a lot of designers graduating every single year. And I believe that well, as a as a young graduate, your... there is so much competition and you are afraid to decline projects in that at least that’s initial first stage of your career, so to speak, because, well, there is always another one who will pick the project up. So, you feel like you’re missing out on chances. Let’s see.... I believe that is was 2018 that you received a grant from the stimulation fund, is that true?

Bernhard: Ya

Kelvin: Okay. I was just interested. Why, why was it necessary to have this grant? And could you goals otherwise not be realized?

Bernhard: Well, that was actually one part which... Before the grant, I actually didn’t have a clear idea of what I’m doing. I knew that I wanted to work on special issues. I... but I was going so broad in my head as well that what I really liked about the grant, this gave me time to reflect on where I really want to work on. And I think in that sense, it was absolutely necessary to have the grant because I could really... I could take my time to develop my own design practice, which you usually don’t have. You don’t have that time. I think that’s why it was really, really valuable. And I could very clearly understand of like, where do I want to go as a creative person? And where do I really feel happy of working on. And that’s partly because I got the money from the stimulerings fonds. But it also helped me to see a lot of professionals throughout the process. Like throughout the process, if you say, oh, I’m one of the talents from the stimulerings fonds, which it does help me to approach people. You know, people are more
open if you are somehow selected or a special. Which is strange, but...

00:05:00

*Kelvin*: that’s the way it works right?

00:05:01

*Bernhard*: That’s kind of like, yeah, people are wondering like, who are you? And when you can use something to lure them in. They also more freely give you information. I don’t think everybody (...?).

00:05:16

*Kelvin*: Yeah. It’s also a networking opportunity in that sense then.

00:05:18

*Bernhard*: Yeah, it helped me really to reflect. I really understood that throughout that process, because I’ve tried many different things, throughout the process I really understood that the project, which I want to work on, are projects where I work together with the community, with people with... somebody who lives the problem I think. That’s what I was really, that’s what I was really interested in.

00:05:50

*Kelvin*: That’s a good bridge to my next question then. The question is stated like, hé, “to what extent are third parties involved in the design process?” And I phrased it that way for other interviewees. But maybe you have a bit more clear idea what I mean. Really, going to the idea of co-creation and participatory design methods. Are you employing these kind of methods in your practice?

00:06:18

*Bernhard*: Not in the traditional sense of it.

00:06:19

*Kelvin*: OK.

00:06:21

*Bernhard*: I mean, maybe it’s a personal thing. I got a bit fed up with all these post-it workshops. It’s I know that you can go to a very quick results if you have designed spreads or if you have, let’s say, co-creative workshops to find a solution. But you’re forcing things so much that. You oblige people to come up with a solution in a day which they couldn’t solve in several months. So, I usually don’t try to be that harsh on it. I try to kind of making it a development process. But the co-creational part is really important to me because I don’t think that designers can work on these issues alone. I usually always work together with an expert who has the knowledge on it because I don’t. I simply don’t understand the system behind it. I don’t understand the political influences which are there. I mean, there’s so many things. If you work on issues in society, you...why, why do you occur as they are currently are. So many things, and what you need there are a lot of smart people and a lot of people will believe that something can be done better and then work together with them. So, I think this that’s quite important. And I mean, these people can be, like I said, it could be the people who live the problem. It could be the community who lives in the neighbourhoods because they are also experts.

00:08:00

*Kelvin*: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, true. And then what... are you then still... would you consider yourself the decision maker in that process or are you more a facilitator of a process?

00:08:14

*Bernhard*: I’m more a facilitator. I think that’s quite clear. It’s also what I enjoy very much.
I, I enjoy most of the time the facilitation of a process. I usually try to stimulate that process, but not direct it. So I think that’s quite something important for me and for my work is that... my work... at least I try to have it’s not a forcible process so that you kind of like you have to have a solution now. But to kind of like end up with the steps. Because at one... some people, it will take a week to figure out what the next step is. Some people might have it in two hours to try something out. But you can’t force them to all do it in four hours. Because that just doesn’t work. So, like, what I facilitate is the investigation and the discovery of their process. And while doing it, I guide them with the knowledge I have of how to clarify a creative ideas for example.

Kelvin: Why do you think these methods are appropriate?

Bernhard: Because what we are, what we learn to do in our society, and that’s for a lot of sectors, is we learned to work in protocols. And protocols are great because everybody can follow them. But it also takes away creativity. You unlearn to be creative because you’ve got told what to do. And... It depends on how passionate you are, but to take responsibility to do something different, because you think, oh, yeah, its better this way. If you’re passionate, you will do it. If you are not certain, you will not be creative because you want to stick to the protocol because you’re like, Oh, but I don’t want to do anything wrong and this has been thought trough by somebody. So, I think that creative methods. Help to break out of this protocol thinking. They help to allow people to freely think to give them kind of space to experiment. I think that’s, that’s why it’s necessary.

Kelvin: Do you think these, these methods would also work in a more commercial client base setting?

Bernhard: I think that’s the thing, a lot of these, these things are mainly applied in client base settings.

Kelvin: Well, you see a lot of a lot of things, they, they are more like in the form of a self initiated side-project of companies, a more traditional graphic design or advertising companies come up with an idea or an projects, and then they, they use these methods, for example.

Bernhard: Well, I apply it to client based settings as well, like, for example, it is one of the things which as a social designer with its an income source to have the facilitations for these kind of workshops. I try to do it is a bit different, then the things you learn in the university’s kind of these co-creation workshops. as social designers we practice that a lot. And we do that a lot. I can imagine that other... areas - I know product design does it a lot as well. I worked for Phillips really shortly as an intern in Austria. And I know that they did a lot on... marketing with like, participatory workshops with clients or potential clients to just test the product to see what (...?). For example, they had an epilator and there was a woman, she was really funny, she just went with these epilators to potential customers and talked with them while the women were using the product, which is very funny, because you get very, very nice stories and a lot of information about the product.

Kelvin: Let's see. I just a quick question, do you have. Because I also wanted to make visual analysis of a project. Do you have a project that shows this tension, this client based... Do you have a project which I can visually...put an analysis on?
Bernhard: The tension between client based and yeah.

Kelvin: Well, yeah, for example, the, uh, the just the product what you did where you worked at the client-based assignment in a broad sense. Right. And just so that I can look at the outcomes of that process and I can compare and visualize certain things.

Bernhard: I have to see, because now it, from the top of my head, I wouldn’t know which project sits there.

Kelvin: Mm hmm.

Bernhard: Because they usually try to guide them really like that. The end result will be. Uh, going out of this tension. And you can see and processes and how we talk about things. Most likely not from the project itself,

Kelvin: But you can also send me something later that I just, just have some visuals so I can...It also doesn’t have to be finished. Doesn’t have to be your particular design thing. Just a process where you were involved as a facilitator or you know. So that I can look at what is the outcome of your involvement in these processes?

Bernhard: I mean, one of the interesting, most interesting projects I did, but I don’t know if that will work for you, that is that we as human rights project because it is because it is literally of how I see Design work in the future.

Kelvin: You know what, that really will work fine. But if you say, OK, what this you could project that you could highlight, then I would use that. Then maybe I need some more images from you, which is what you did and just maybe...doesn’t be... it doesn’t need to be high res.

Bernhard: I will send you something that’s...

Kelvin: Great! that would be very nice. Um, just some last questions then a little bit about the future of the, well, the social design sector. Which things would you like to see... wait I should phrase that differently? What would you change to improve the position of the socially responsible designer?

Bernhard: I would start educating clients.

Kelvin: Oh, OK.

Bernhard: Because I think... it was very funny. A friend of mine, she’s an architect, and she actually told me that... she said: as an architect the first task you have is to educate the client. And I think that’s such a smart thing to do because, I mean, of course, for them, the client will say, like, I want to have gold windows, but as an architect you have the responsibility
to say, like, look the windows are going to be broken very, very soon because of weather. So I had to learn a lot about it because I think, and that is these times as well, I think that there is... if we would start to educate the clients of the social designer like, for example, municipality ministries of what social design can do for them. We can not only stimulate our market, of course, but we can also allow them to openly approach problems. One problem, which, for example, will happen in Amsterdam very soon, is the energy transition from gas to electricity. And at least that’s what I heard recently, is that they will start with one of the poorest neighbourhoods. Now, I don’t know the name of it anymore, and this transition will happen with one of the poorest neighbourhoods. Well, if you compare it, I mean, poor people don’t have money. They most likely will also have less consumption of unsustainable services. So, like there... I think there, this, for example, issues where I would like to see social designers involved. Because it influences so much society, but this can only happen when the clients or the people who we can work for know about it.

00:17:21

Kelvin: Mm hmm. Clear. OK, I think I have the answers to my questions. I will pause the recording here.
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