Good People Behave, Bad People Design. Misbehaving as a Methodological Framework for Design and Design Education

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Good people behave. Bad people design. Misbehaving as a framework for design and education.

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Abstract: What happens when unwanted or unexpected attitudes infiltrate design processes, artifacts and uses? This paper focuses on misbehaving as part of the paradigm of design research that explores new ways to think our objects, spaces and interactions. We build upon a monosc of case-studies and conceptual inputs to identify how ‘misbehaving attitudes’ may operate within contexts informed by habitus, norms, regulations, standards, protocols, procedures, and/or laws. The hypothesis of this in-progress research is that these attitudes should be considered as potential methodological approaches that can enrich and extend the most ‘classical’ practices of design. To put it forthright: can ‘misbehaving’ approaches in design enhance the practices of design? To conclude this paper we will discuss how ‘misbehaving in design education could foster the ‘critical thinking’ advocated in numerous curriculums (Combs, Connem & Newhall, 2009; Finn, Baum & Newhall, 2011; Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche, 2012; etc.).

The mischievous ways of design
What happens when attitudes usually identified as marginal, extreme, unwanted or unexpected infiltrate design processes, artifacts and uses? What about the designer’s ways of reaching? Are the mischievous ways of design? We propose “misbehaving” as a specific development of design exploration (Falkman, 2008). Design exploration “often seeks to test ideas and to ask ‘what if?’—but also to provoke, criticize, and experiment with design methodologies, techniques out, which leads to the singular ways to conceptual inputs to identify how “misbehaving attitudes” may or unexpected attitudes infiltrate design. From the historic spot of Burnside in Portland (Oregon) (skateboarding, and especially the practice of DIY-spot construction in the Skateboard culture
In this case study, we take interest in the ways digital design tools are conditioning the design processes and can be conditioned in return. We propose “misbehaving” as a certain way of using digital tools in current design practices as we will explore the question of the ‘disruption’ between the ecclesiastical realities of objects (what has the true faith) versus the work of the everyday (how to dress it right, fair opinion”, while “deviance”, from the late Latin “to violate” or “to disobey”, is understood as the specific properties of some “trouble-making” kind of exploration design that we have chosen to name “misbehaving design”.

While reviewing design literatures on the purposes and aims of design, one can highlight how design can be involved in hegemonic apparatuses of organization and administration (Woodhouse & Platton, 2003; Baudrillard, 1992; Kazi-Tani & Mazi, 2013; Brulé & Kazi-Tani, 2015). This arrangement to disrupt a given framework of thinking, then regulating, what we may call orthodoxy or hegemony, is built from the ecclesiastical realities of objects (what has the true faith) versus the work of the everyday (how to dress it right, fair opinion”, while “deviance”, from the late Latin deviare, should be understood as “leaving the right path”, “not following its normal course.”

Hegemonic attitudes in design research and practice — self-identified as orthodoxy if not regulating any sort of “designer’s deviance” — are not only widely documented with the history of the discipline but have also nurtured mainstream industrial design (Lucas, 1998; 1970); Lowery 1970; Rama, 1984; Fidone, 1994; Brulé & Kazi-Tani, 2015).

On the contrary, if “misbehaviors” might seem to be the “odd numbers” of design, they also seem to address certain of its boundaries, to open breaches in such normative regulative frameworks: a space for debate, empowerment, and rearrangement. If clearly identified, qualified, and conceptualised, they might impact and nurture design methods. In order to examine our intuitions, we have been firstly lecturing after attitudes, in different design contents and at different stages of a design project, which empirically appear in a lesson with the regulating and normalising frames within design and design practice.

Secondly the hypothesis of this in-progress research is that these attitudes should not be considered as marginal ways in design practices, but rather as potential methodological approaches that can enrich and extend the most classical / industrial practices of design. We are exploring ways that these attitudes or approaches are currently rearranging design:

• Processes: questioning conditions and contexts within contemporary digital design contexts.
• Artifacts: disability and dysfunction: neural atrophy.

From a misbehaving attitude to a misbehaving approach? We propose “misbehaving” as a certain way of “interplaying, resetting and reconfiguring a given arrangement.” Let’s consider intensity (“the way in which two or more things have an effect on each other”) as the qualities of relationships between agents (space, artificls, “scripted objects”, materials, tools, users, etc.). These relationships should be spatial, temporal, social, discursive, political, processual, etc. These interplaying agents are forming what we identify as an arrangement (translated from the french “agenecissement”: Delaune & Gustaff, 1995). Designers, artifacts, users, have the ability to re-play, foil, overplay, de-script (Akrich, 1992) this arrangement to break, expand, create rules, scripts, situations, norms, meanings, etc.

We built upon various case studies and theoretical definitions to argue why “misbehaving approaches” may operate within a seemingly rigid context, informed by habitus, norms, regulations, standards, protocols, procedures, and/or laws. Throughout seemingly unrelated fields of conception and application, we observe how “misbehaving attitudes” and “misbehaving approaches” may or unexpected attitudes infiltrate design. To test if, and how, this framework could be used during an actual design project, we proposed a workshop to a design school. It appears that our students struggled to use “misbehaving” during this workshop, but this experiment nonetheless provided us precious insights. Most of the students reported that they understood how “misbehaving” could be effective when it comes to define the scope of a personal project. But they underlined that it did not seem to be easily usable in a professional / industrial project for two reasons. First, because they already had developed a process for that case (see their indicated in the survey). Second, because they assumed that a client, commissioner or trade partner would not agree to see a design brief professionally processed and addressed following a mischievous process. However, they seem to understand how it could help them to face “unexpected problems,” such as social design projects, but reported lacking of concrete tools to put “misbehaving” into application.

Therefore, we believe that “misbehaving” could also be of great interest in design education to foster the “critical thinking” advocated in numerous curriculums. Hence, we will investigate further how to develop dedicated educational material.

Numerous questions remain, that nurture our ongoing research:

• What are the actual possibilities to set a framework for constructive activities exclusively leaning on challenging and opposing frames?
• How could educators possibly teach design methods based on “misbehaving”?
• By extension, within contexts strictly informed by regulative and normative frames, such as education and work, what are the risks of deploying “misbehaving” as a method?• Can we, and should we, designers and educators, deregulate any normative context?

Conclusion and Discussion: Misbehaving in education
Through those case-studies, we have highlighted how “misbehaving” could become a methodological framework to unveil, criticise and counter regulative and normative arrangements that are too often left unquestioned within a design project.

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