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Method& Critique *Frictions and Shifts in RTD*

DOCU-DESIGN or a Reality Check

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Abstract: Design, through current social transitions, has been invited to stand up and face the multi-dimensional geopolitical issues of our time. With this emerging demand, designers and researchers are challenging the limits of their discipline. This research project, based on time spent in the Calais Jungle (France's largest and oldest informal Refugee Camp) reconsiders designer's role(s) in social and contextual transitions. I realized rapidly on the ground, with much bewilderment, that the role I could have in this specific context as a designer was unbeknown to me. In face of the urgency of the situation, the Jungle's inhabitants had become autonomous and by no means needed me, as a designer, to dictate their needs. However, it seemed primordial to be a witness to this ever transitional and both spatially and culturally evolving community of refugees who had created this world-town or town of the future. I instinctively used what design tools I had in order to record this reality, becoming an on the ground design-researcher. I started composing data comprising installations, objects, videos, maps, texts and recordings. This practice, later named docu-design, used design to designate and document a context by materializing realities and creating artifacts in the same manner you would produce proof. Reflecting on this approach, is it possible to determine a way in which design could engage itself socially, culturally and politically, by preparing specific territories in order to act locally-centrically?

Keywords: Documentation; Ethnography praxeology; Ground research; Ambition; Locally Centric; Refugees.

Elizabeth Hale | No Chance, Go Jungle, 2016

Introduction

In order to seize the starting point of this design research project, it seems necessary to proceed chronologically, to know where I stood, where I stand, in relation to the events that have shaped this research and my practice as a designer. The Calais Jungle is older than I am. Since 1990, Calais has been a place of transition for thousands of migrants trying to reach the United Kingdom. This Island, the embodiment of a promised land. The last stop of a journey that has in some cases lasted years. I set foot in the Jungle for the first time in January 2016. It stretched over 18 hectors. At that time there were 5497 inhabitants, 182 families, 205 women, 651 minors, 423 of whom were unaccompanied. On the 18th of January, a one hundred meter perimeter was razed around the camp. This No Man's Land, allowed for better visibility of who was entering and leaving the Jungle. During the month of March, 7,5 hectares were destroyed as the Southern Zone of the camp was dismantled. Taken apart, piece by piece, in front of its recent inhabitants, locals and medias from near and far. 129 minors disappeared during the demolition. The Temporary Accommodation Center was installed. 125 containers, 1500 places, 12 people per container, 6 Ikea bunk beds, 3 living spaces, 2 changing blocks, 2 sanitary blocks, 1 locker per person, no kitchen, no showers, no guests allowed. During the summer of 2016, the number of inhabitants swelled to nearly 10,000, now living on nearly half as much land. The invisible became too visible. 150 buses were hired by the French government. Over 400 Welcome and Orientation Centers sprouted across the country. On the 24th of October, the destruction began. 7 days of dismantling. 7 days to demolish a town. 7 days to undo a community. 6486 people were evacuated to Centers. The third age of the Jungle ended, but the infinite loop continues.

Design vs. its own ambition

To say that the beginning of this research dates back to September 2015 would be a lie. In reality, it was at this time that this particular subject touched me personally, that I began to feel concerned. For it was at this time that the number of internally and externally displaced persons soared to an all time high and the number of migrants arriving in Europe was multiplied by four, arriving at a total of more than a million in one year. As soon as this global phenomena began to (physically) touch the Occident, it was deflected into a Design Problem, into an opportunity for design. All categories of design seized this multi-dimensionnel geopolitical problem as an opportunity to launch calls for projects and calls for papers, inviting, nay demanding, designers to stand up and face their responsibilities, to take position. Design has, and always has had, a problematic ego. As expressed by designer and researcher Clemence Mergy, it has unclenched defensive mechanisms in order to outshine its evil reputation (Sottsass, 1973) in its struggle to obtain self-satisfaction and legitimacy (Mergy, 2008). Design therefore, has dictated the modern concept of needs through its contribution to major improvements in the everyday lives of some and as Mergy explains through quoting Alexis Toqueville, "the lack of many things result henceforth in misery". Design is well aware that despite efforts, it is far from eradicating this misery, as in a twisted way it is feeding off it. It is said to lack perspective on the real impact it can have in socio-economic and political crisis, positioning itself as the ultimate problem-solving discipline, in a way that coincides with the narrative of neoliberal European policies (Pater, 2016). This lack of perspective can be seen for example in brazen event communication, such as the World Design Summit hosted in Montréal in 2017, whose slogans included "10 days to change the World" and "Weapons of mass creation".

Author of the Incomplete Manifesto for Growth, Bruce Mau, states that designers see the world upside down - as an awful situation is a perfect situation for design thinking (Mau, 2015). It was in this context that What Design Can Do was born through the launch, with financing from the Ikea Foundation and UNHCR, of the "International Refugee Challenge". The slogan of which read "real life solutions to global problems". However, designers have a tendency to deal with "ill" defined problems (Cross, 2011) or as Richard Buchanan called them "wicked problems" (Rittell 1960, Buchanan 1992), and as designer researcher Tiphaine Kazi-Tani observed in hir critique of design activism, a societal question becomes a design problem based mainly on the fact that a designer has considered it under the prism of design (Kazi-Tani, 2016). As designers tend to focus on the solution to the problem rather than the precise definition and understanding of the problem at hand (Cross, 2011), Rittel claims that, as a result, the "wickedness" is sucked out of the situation in question. In this sense, Kazi-Tani ponders whether the complexity of current day geopolitics have had a "wicked problem" effect to which design is drawn and impulsed to solve. Therefore big issues of our time are turned into design problems to be addressed, fixed and solved as designers endorse the role of super-heroes, battling against societal problems. As Mau exclaims, decidedly, global tragedies - whether they be man-made or natural - have become situations in which design could supposedly be put to the test (Mau, 2015). Attempts have even ventured, for example in the design research magazine Azimuts dedicated to design's ambition, to deflate this ego. An article of this journal claimed that "the designer today is not much more, nor much less, than a lubricant: the cogs aren't turning well? Drop of oil, pour out the oil can (...) They present no danger for the order of this wrong going world" (Doze, 2016).

It was therefore amidst this flow of opportunities and critics, and in this multi-dimensional geo-political context that I found myself, at the time a postgrad student. I was finishing a research project on displaced objects following a period of time living in the Romanian capital of Bucharest, and was propelled to consider what it meant to be a displaced human. Something attained during my years as a design student egged me to consider this huge societal grey area as a situation that design should be looking at. I was fueled by incentives to step up and do my bit (WDCD, 2015) and my design school education that let me to believe that problems necessitated a materialised solution, although I struggle now to recall just what material forms I thought these might be. I was therefore rapidly overwhelmed, for the first time, by a sensation of design emergency and eagerly headed to Calais, where, through various medias I had seen, heard and read about France's largest informal refugee camp, for what became my first "embedded designer" experience (Peyricot, 2016). Arriving in this place that I associated with going back to the U.K, a place that I, like so many others, only travelled through. Here in the North of France's city of transition, thousands of people were trapped, unable to move forward on their journey through Europe towards Britain, a country I had the privilege to have chosen to leave. Stopped in their tracks by a natural border. By many man made ones too.

The Calais Jungle, a spatial, social and political study

On site, I discovered a World Town. This « *lieu de vie* », so different from everything I had seen and read in the media, stretched across 4 squared kilometers. Organized in neighborhoods, its high-street housed restaurants, cafés, barbers, grocery shops and hammams. Its architecture was eclectic, built with found materials or materials brought over from Britain by volunteers. Several geo-domes were scattered in the South Zone. Carpenters Without Borders had built a hexagonal Legal Center that was open for guidance. Hundreds of prefabricated wooden shelters, wrapped in tarpaulin, were erected all over the site, dispersed around tents and makeshift shelters. Each one interiorly decorated by its inhabitants, filled with quilts and blankets in an attempt to keep warm in the freezing Northern France's winters. Each evening, the high street's neon lights lit the passage for the Jungle's rush hour. Makeshift stands and bags of items for sale or exchange filled the beaten earth road. As the night market began there was a constant hum of electric generators. As some merchandised, others prepared for a long night of "trying", signifying that they would spend hours attempting to cross the Atlantic Ocean by boat or by train, hidden in a car or lorry. By morning they returned, defeated, too often wounded. « No chance, Go Jungle ». « Allez allez allez ! ». The cries of French Police echoing in their ears.

This town, as the Jungle was effectively a town, both in size and meaning, was organized both spatially, socially and economically. I have to pause and say, I by no means want to idealize what took place here, as in most towns, there were good things, amazing things even, just as painful, violent and dangerous situations occurred. Howbeit in reality, the role design could play in this particular circumstance was far from clear. In view of the urgency of the situation, the inhabitants had become autonomous and whilst lacking most basic services they found solutions to the problems they faced, making in most cases something from nothing. They had no need, it seemed, for an onsite designer. The most critical problems that needed "solving" were of political and/or lawful manner, mostly linked to crossing the Channel to the United Kingdom. Therefore, it effectively seemed that if I assumed a problem solving role, the most obvious way to act for a designer would have been to design ways out, ways in order to move forward, to smuggle documents, even people, to imagine tools to help them travel easier or protect them from police violence, by designing solutions to make them invisible or on the contrary their voices heard. This baffled me for weeks, having worked on the question of smuggling objects before coming to the Jungle when I was faced with the reality of the situation, I had to measure the risks I was willing to take against the responsibility I felt.

It was therefore only faced with this design dilemma that I began to consider the role of design. The role it had endorsed or the one that it could endorse in face of all of the political, geopolitical, social and economical complexities of this phenomena. Through emerging Humanitarian Design projects (Nussbaum, 2010), it seemed as though design as a discipline planned to tackle these multidimensional issues in the same way it has considered social problems for the past century. That is to say by using, one may say, outdated methods on totally new problems. To put it in other words, designers continue to use the same capitalistic methodology on phenomena that are totally new and unprecedented despite any similarities they may hold with previous historical events. WDCD is the perfect example: the same design thinking and design logic used and sold to companies and corporations is recycled in order to help underprivileged social groups (Lorusso, 2018). The question remains whether this form of humanitarian design is a plausible action or just an attempt of do-gooding, of designing for needs or cultures that aren't fully understood. Ivan Illich famously said, "To hell with good intentions" (Illich, 1968), as disturbingly to all appearances, humanitarian design could be perceived through postcolonial eyes as colonialism (Nussbaum 2010, Keshavarz 2018). Consequently, thus designers stand, searching for solutions whilst totally out of their depth in what could be considered, in the short history of design, as an identity-crisis. Metahaven's Graphic designer Daniel van Der Velden claims that "if there is something that needs to be designed, it is the designer himself" (van Der Velden, 2006). Whereas designer David Enon, certain that design, as it is practiced to today, is obsolete, invites fellow designers to "strive to design one thing: the end of their profession" (Enon, 2018). Being far from alone in this quest for a more eclectic, politically, socially and ethically aware design toolbox, there is little doubt that

< Figure 1. No Chance! Go Jungle! Photo: Elizabeth Hale. A panoramic view of the Northern Zone of the Camp taken during the month of February 2016, before the demolition of the Southern Zone.

Figure 2.
La Jungle. Photo: David Enon. An evolving map testifies the continuous physical movement of the Calais Jungle as with each major geographical change the map is updated in red and the date is changed. The maps can be layered over a light table.

a rising number of designers are challenging their own practice and discipline, pushing it beyond the production of food for the system onto more critical ground. However, whether it be because designers no longer wish to be restricted by the social problems of our time or whether they are humbled by them, it would seem as if a majority of this wave of designers, when confronted with present social transitions, prefer to hypothesize, to contemplate possible or improbable futures. Categories labeling themselves under speculative design, design fiction or critical design (Dunne & Raby 2013) have fully emerged over the past two decades, observing current-day issues from another time spectrum. Despite the fact that critical and speculative design advocates for a new position and role for designers, design fiction for example was in no way useful in the Calais Jungle. This was certainly due to the fact that the problems faced could not have been more profoundly anchored in the present. As Luiza Prado put it, "your dystopia is happening to us, right now". Some people's dystopian prospective scenarios are the ongoing everyday reality of others (Prado de O. Martins 2014, Vieira de Oliveira 2014). In a certain way, the reality of the Jungle was far more laborious than any producible design fiction scenario. Was this what the Science-Fiction writer William Gibson meant when he wrote "the future is already here, just not evenly distributed" (Gibson, 2003)? Nevertheless, there was no need to imagine a possible future as the whole place offered a glimpse of it. The design needed in the Calais Jungle had to be posted in the present and not the future, in reality not fiction.

This research could also therefore be considered as a grasp to understand how I would undertake and consider design practice from then on fourth and if or what forms would be produced. Primarily, it seemed necessary to prove the existence of everything I was witness to. Very instinctively at first, I produced rushes, images, recordings and sound and paper maps, on site. What was produced could therefore be considered on two levels, that which was destined for the Jungle's inhabitants and that which was aimed to show the outside world the other reality, one that wasn't' published by the press. The first level therefore constituted the maps that were directly

intentioned for the inhabitants and originally destined to be used in situ by the inhabitants of the Jungle, exposing the various infrastructures present throughout the zones and neighborhoods.
I guess that in that respect, I was effectively looking for problems that I could solve or areas in which my skills were useful, therefore the design process is more or less a classic one. During the day, I was freer to explore and move around in the communities allowing me to see all of the infrastructures available onsite, being in most cases more than welcomed. Disturbingly, I suppose this was an abuse of my position, as a young British female who has lived in France for the past decade. The maps were hand drawn, based on a site map that I copied from a recent sky view google maps image of the Jungle's emplacement. I would walk around with the map and pens in my raincoat pocket and complete it as I went about my day, taking pauses to continue it at the White Mountain Afghan Café or in friends' cabins. It became a source of discussion, a way of collaborating and discovering the entirety of the Jungle together. Once the map was finished and dated, I would head back down to my Design School in Angers (in the West of France), scan and screen print in black as many copies as possible (for as little as possible) on the cheapest paper, and head back up to Calais in order to distribute. However, despite my efforts, the maps needed to be continuously updated in order to keep up with the constant transitions in spatial organisation. In order to stay up to date, the next step necessitated that I cut out and replace the outdated parts, which saved time updating them on site. These perpetual changes were partly due to arrivals, departures and fires but mostly to official demolitions. Therefore each map became obsolete with each major transition, becoming testimonies of the continuous evolution of the spatial and social organisation.

For example, the comparative of these maps illustrate how the French Government's attempt to reduce the number of inhabitants failed, as the inhabitants of the South Zone, razed in March 2016, simply moved to occupy the spaces left in the North Zone, soon followed by thousands more in the summer months. Their original use value was lost yet their status and narrative changed in order to testify to the existence of what no longer was. They therefore joined the rushes and sound recordings of everyday life in the Jungle, with the aim to produce another image of the Jungle of those which were so largely shown by various media. The rushes and images aimed to show what had been created, spatially, physically, and how spaces and objects

Figures 3. & 4.
The Calais Jungle is older than I am. Photos: Elizabeth Hale. During the elaboration of this design project, I transformed the cellars of my design School into my research laboratory, where I could easily use all the tools and space at hand in order to lay the information I had acquired flat. Whilst I was here, I used Twitter and WhatsApp to stay informed on what was happening on the ground. I coated the walls of this cellar with a timeline, printed cheaply on A4 paper and pasted directly onto the wall. It traced the history of the Calais Jungle back to 1991, I updated it live as changes happened.

were used. There are no facial close ups and never any form of interview; moments of life are captured through hands playing dominos, making and serving tea or shadows dancing. The composition of all these elements, their various forms and medias began to constitute an archive of the present, continuously documenting the now.

In the aftermath and once this present was no longer, I named this process docu-design, as a design practice that didn't strive to produce at any cost nor to produce usage scenarios but observations of use. I had used design ethnographically, not in order to offer solutions, but to better understand precise contexts, reversing Cross's definition of design by looking to define the problem rather than the solution. Forms were produced in order to communicate the reality and demonstrate the ever changing spatial transitions. These productions became a sort of design proof, a design whose main goal was to serve as a testimony and a witness. This method also necessitated a certain proficiency of the context, pathing the way for other potential precise and contextualized design projects. Anchored in the present, in the presents as Donna Haraway defends (Haraway, 2016), this design practice quite literally became a way of documenting, articulating and giving form to realities, envisioned from where I stood. From there onward, my field-research searched to explore a design practice that would document the present instead of speculating the future. A design that could document and produce material proof of everyday reality, of how this makeshift town was organized both spatially and socially. As a designer, the tools that were known to me became my weapons of choice in order to witness, document and act.

Considering an ethnographical and documentary design practice

Although the beginnings of this research applied a traditional "design problem equals design solution" methodology, the situation in which it was embedded enthralled an upheaval in conventional design process. This is because the concept of design ethnography

Figure 5. NO CHANCE, GO JUNGLE. Photo: Elizabeth Hale. A series of rushes, each narrating a different neighborhood of the jungle, separated between the south-end (demolished on the 16/ 03/2017) and the north-end (demolished on the 25/10/2016) mapped out on charging telephone's screens as they would be in the Calais Jungle.

Figures 6. to 10. Jungle hours. Photos: Elizabeth Hale. A series of rushes each narrating a different neighborhood of the Jungle throughout the day, separated between the south-end (demolished on the 16/ 03/2017) and the north-end (demolished on the 25/10/2016).

and documentary design, as opposed to the production of design solutions or scenarios, would question the role of design in society at its pro-productive core. Nonetheless, a form of documentation and ethnography are more or less traditionally linked to design practice. For example, the designer and researcher Nicolas Nova has widely considered "ethnography" or "field research" as part of a design project (Nova, 2015). He claims that designer's reasons for doing ethnographic research are as varied as the ways they do it and effectively, ethnography has been practiced in design. However its role has been mainly reduced to a primordial phase leading to a better understanding of a situation or a group of people that in many cases constitute the clientele. For these clients, it is what is produced in the aftermath of this observation phase that legitimately constitutes the design project, that is to say the design product, in this never ending battle for disciplinary legitimacy.

What is proposed here however, quite on the contrary, is to consider an "ethnographic praxeology" in design (Thackara, 2014) not as the means to an end, but as the end product itself. Effectively, instead of ethnographic praxeology being an invisible process, this research questions whether this phase, its documentation and its communication could legitimately constitute a design process as a whole. Therefore the combination of knowledge issued from fieldwork, theoretical reflection and graphic representation could embody research through design, replacing production and profit factors with territorial and human ones. This methodology would therefore redefine design's role in precise and complex situations by endorsing the role of observing and documenting a reality instead of searching for solutions or speculating, thereupon going against design's vocation and essence which is to change, better and transform. Thus, bordering research and practice through new forms and formats, this could be a solution in order to make-up for the tools available no longer being adequate for the tasks at hand, consenting designers to experience, observe, decrypt, analyse and give form to present-day phenomena. These forms and formats would allow for artefacts under various typologies to be intentionally created, potentially infinitely depending on the specific fieldwork. Design could therefore inscribe itself in present situations, continuously archiving and constituting the now. Comparably to the Calais Jungle research project, these artifacts could aim to communicate and make societal phenomenons publicly visible and out of the shadows, becoming testifying objects. Thus responding to emerging needs for information on a different circuit, documents that are neither official, media or institutional. Necessitating an interdisciplinary design practice, using new description and inscription tools in order to keep trace, retrace and archive the present. Trading the strive for a feel good humanitarian design, for didactic and informative traits that render the appearance of reality and strive to prove the existence of complex multi-layered phenomenons.

Hypothetically, it would seem that the appeal to use design to understand and document situations would also be linked to the question of necessity. There is no doubt that today design is faced with impossible design situations, many of which cannot be or can only partly be addressed by someone of the profession. The role design and designers could endorse in this new coming era, predicted to see the end of the capitalistic ideology that has fueled design's rise to the summit, major global climate changes, mass migration movements across the globe, without commenting on the political climate, has never been more blurred, contradictory or unsure. Often in these cases design-

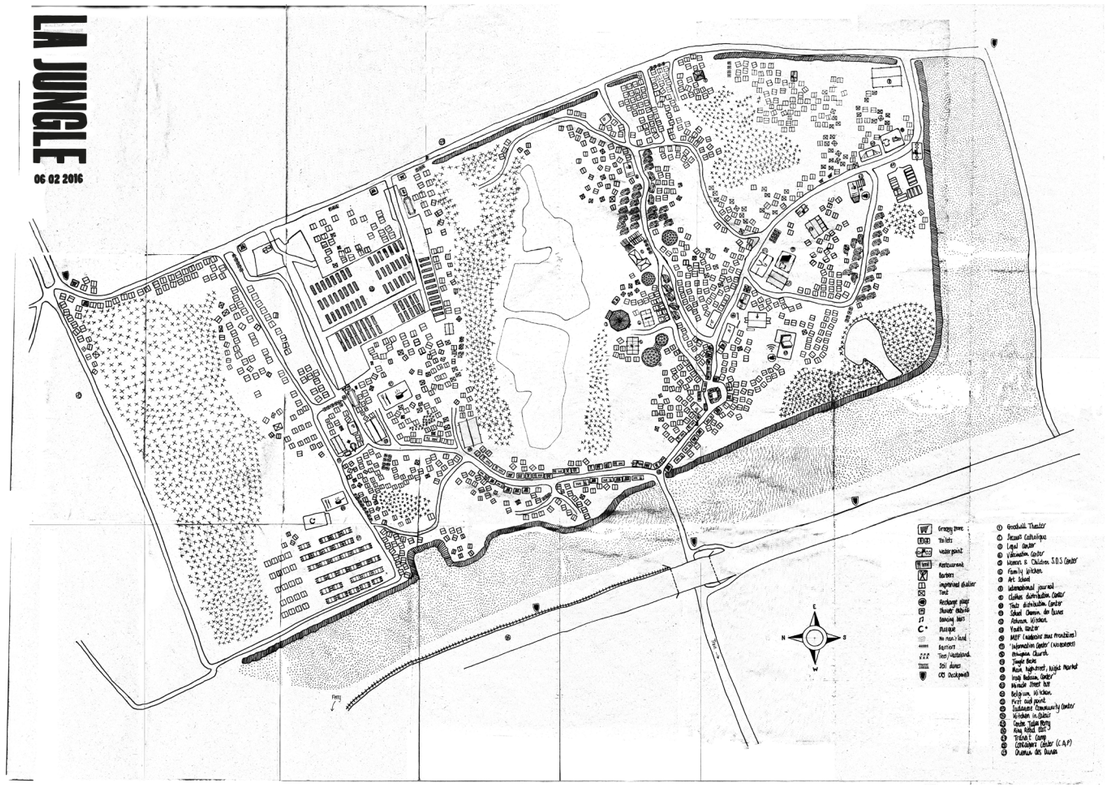
ers must accept or know when to accept that design is not needed, or that their place or their intervention as a designer could be something else. In all likelihood, in some circumstances, for example in the case of the previously stated Calais Jungle, any other kind of design is not required from a designer. This is summarized, for example, by the cubain designer Ernesto Oroza who documents the design practice of non designers in Cuba. His publication Rik'mbili (Oroza, 2009) reads as an ode to the ingeniousness of this ultimate design system, where everything, all objects, all matter and industrial materials are continuously reused and reinvented. His collections are the absolute testimony to a design practice that is not his own. He is however, a designer witness, a docu-designer, who through the recordings of this practice, has done so much more than try and imitate or complete it in anyway. Oroza understood his role as a designer in Cuba was not necessarily that which was expected of him, yet this project is undoubtedly design and Ernesto Oroza a designer.

It would seem, through my personal experience, these and other numerous examples, that designers have resorted to documenting precise contexts and creating documents of proof in order to act in complex and multi-dimensional design situations. In this case, could a form of docu-design be a way of creating a design project in situations where any other form of design is impossible or uncalled for? If this should avail to be true, the current shifting paradigms in design practice could lead to a revolution in design's role in societal transitions. Docu-design shouldn't be considered as an attempt to improve or transform the discipline. It could however be a way of using design tools in order to reconsider what exists, what determines reality and whose reality is in question, of recovering and attempting to understand and reveal the mechanisms. It asks the design questions of "who" and "what" in order to understand "why" and "what if". It acts through bringing forth or shedding light on new facts and data or in order to propose counter-fictions (Citton, 2012) by rediscovering that other ways are possible. Yves Citton claimed that "the most radical (form of counter-fiction) could be qualified as documentary, in that it strives to counteract the fictionalisation of our world by recording "reality blocks" whose mechanical presentation helps us rediscover that another world is possible". Instinctively, a documentary counter fiction was what the Jungle project became in the aftermath of the Jungle's dismantlement in October 2016, this docu-design project through the basis of what existed, strived to show that its dismantlement and invisibilisation was not the only possible option.

Conclusion

Although its ambition is out-measured (if somewhat admirable), design has to compellingly reevaluate its role in society in order to seize new opportunities and needs. This particular on the ground design research project underlined several missing parts in design practice but primarily the need to reevaluate and shift paradigms in design today. On the one hand, the Calais Jungle represented what I thought was, in some measure, an impossible design problem. What I thought was a design dead-end gave way to an exploration of innovative ways of acting and reacting differently. By getting over this hurdle, the path led to new questions: is it possible to imagine a new era where designers could be released of their intimate relationship with material form in order to seize new operational tools? One in which designers stand tall as non-specialists at the meeting point of numerous fields such as sociology, anthropology, politics, economics, ecology and technology? The query on whether design could be used

to document precise contexts in order to offer a reading of territories was an enigmatic and intuitive one. However, as demonstrated through previous examples, even though a form of docu-design is apparently not linked to any determinable corpus or historical, aesthetic or technical category, designers have used design ethnographically in order to document and act in impossible design situations. Therefore, is it possible to determine that docu-design could be an emerging design category? One that has not been officially named or claimed but practiced, having the possibility to reconsider a designers role in social and contextual transitions, giving them the power not only to witness, but to act in a pertinent and useful manner once this on the ground study has taken place. If we reset the preconceptions of a design destined to save the world, the time has come to reconsider current-day as a fertile ground for a political, social and ethical design practice. Design for the future? Design for now.



>Figure 11. La Jungle. Photo: Elizabeth Hale. An original copy of the Jungle Evolution Map, printed and distributed to the inhabitants of the Jungle in order to point out the various infrastructures available.

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