Decoloniality for Conceptualizing
The Future of Social Design

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ABSTRACT

The practise of social design is facing challenges with the advent of the rewesternization of the West. This led to attempts to develop future social design concepts free from Western ontologies. This paper offers the possibility of developing a social design concept based on the concept of decoloniality. The literature studies method and empirical observation were employed to formulate the concept. The results of reading literature sources and their comparison with current social design practices lead to the conclusion that the concept of decoloniality is essential to be adopted in social design practice. This adoption will increase the possibility of a sustainable design process for preferable social life and the natural environment.

Keywords: social design, decoloniality, delinking, communal, ontology

INTRODUCTION

The practice of social design began to emerge after the second world war. However, to explain the emergence of social design practice, we can draw on a long history from when the design profession emerged. The design profession, specifically product design, was born as a direct result of the industrial revolution, especially in England in the 18th century. Forty (1995) stated that the beginning of design could be marked by the need among entrepreneurs in the early industrial revolution for a figure capable of making a 'mock-up' to be mass-produced in the factory. This background caused the design orientation at the beginning to support the industry. Thus, the logic applied is the logic of capitalism, which pursues efficiency and quantity of production to increase the surplus for the capital owners. In such situations, the designer is fully employed to serve the industry. Therefore, the design practice was obsessed with achieving economic progress through a capitalistic economic framework.

The practice of design as an industrial 'linchpin' peaked post-World War 2 when society was flooded with industrial products. This situation later became the "Consumer Society" background, as Baudrillard (1998) called it. People consume goods more than they need. The negative impact often mentioned is the degradation of the quality of society and the natural environment.

Under these conditions, some design practices and researchers launched criticism. They demanded that the design be more socially and ecologically responsible. Despite criticism from various designers, the design's development still sticks to the construction of Western epistemology. The concept that design exists to improve the condition of

society has its roots in Western ontology as the world's saviour. For example, this tendency can be seen in some of Papanek's social design practices, such as his residency in Bali (Kries et.al, 2018). Papanek on several occasions, mentioned that the design needs to do more for people in poor countries. As if to suggest that the design comes from developed countries (West) that need to help poor countries.

Thus,how should design practice, specifically social design, be carried out? How should design be practised in the Southern Hemisphere, for example, to solve the environmental problems? This paper attempts to offer the concept of decoloniality as a basis for future social design practices to liberate humans from the oppressive framework of Western ontology. This model is essential to anticipate the world's uncertain future, which is still under threat from various crises, including climate change, pandemic, and food and fuel crises. These crises are primarily rooted in the greedy practices of the production system under oppressive capitalism. Therefore the decoloniality approach offers the idea of shifting the capitalistic framework without falling back into an oppressive Western ontology.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Call for responsible design
Design in the post-WW2 era goes hand in hand with industrial and technological advances in the mode of production. This condition causes the design to primarily support industrial production and flood the market with consumer products. Criticism from among designers emerged. Ken Garland and 20 graphic designers voiced this criticism in the manifesto 'First Things First' in 1964. They assessed that graphic design through advertising should be able to play a more significant role in promoting social agendas, such as promoting culture, education and social activities, not merely advertising consumer products (Poynor, 2019).

In addition to the 'First Things First' manifesto, Viktor Papanek also criticized the top priorities of design in serving the market. Papanek conveys his critical views in his seminal book "Design for the Real World" published first time in 1971. In his statement, Papanek criticized the post-war design practice, which tended to only dwell on the stylization and repetition of the obsolete. De Bont (2021) underscores Papanek's indignation that designers should dedicate their profession to designing products for the poor, the sick, and the disabled instead of luxury products for the few. Papanek also adds to the importance of awareness to use natural resources more responsibly and a better balance of attention between the regions of developed and underdeveloped countries or, even in the most developed countries, between different social groups in modern society (Morelli, 2003).

Decoloniality
To understand the concept of decoloniality I follow the views expressed by Walter Mignolo. Mignolo's decoloniality concept stems from the main idea, namely the concept of 'delinking.' Delinking in the context of decoloniality means shifting away from the development framework or instructions dictated by the West (US, EU, IMF and World Bank) (Mignolo, 2012). Delinking does not mean breaking away

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from the "economic type" but instead preventing the recurrent domination of those economic organizations and countries (Mignolo, 2012).

To further understand the delinking process, Mignolo said there are two layers and levels of delinking, the level of civil society and political society. At the level of civil society, attempts to break the domination of the West and the market are in the area of questioning the state's economic, political and daily public service decisions (health, education, food). On the other hand, the 'global political society' is moving more radically by attempting to break 'economic coloniality', which is an economic system based on growth and development that has created and increased poverty. Marxists name 'Economic Coloniality' by capitalism. However, Mignolo adds that 'Economic Coloniality' defines more than just capitalism. A more complex management structure oppresses the inferior class (Mignolo, 2011).

The delinking concept is rooted in the desire not always to obey growth and development needs. Contextualizing with design practice, epistemically, 'delinking' distances design from exploitative - and perhaps oppressive - practices due to the long history of design as a "linchpin" of capitalistic industry.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the literature studies method combined with direct observation of several social design intervention practices. Literature study is an appropriate method for synthesizing research findings at an early stage, especially in areas where more research needs to be done to build a more established theoretical framework (Synder, 2019).The literature study was conducted primarily to explore, interpret and relate the concept of decoloniality and social design practice. Many experts have conducted studies on decoloniality. I seek to contextualise those studies in social design work experiences. The results of the reading on the issue of decoloniality are then compiled to obtain clarity on its position to social design practices. Meanwhile, the results of direct observations and interactions with several social design work practices are utilised to directly compare the current practice of social design.

The two sources produced various findings. Those findings were then analysed to formulate how to conceptualise the future of social design using decoloniality thinking. The expected result, of course, is not just to re-amplify the previous opinions and thoughts, but how these thoughts are reformulated to contribute to the concept of future development of social design.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The concept of delinking in the decoloniality framework described by Mignolo is appropriate for the basis for developing a social design framework in the future. As explained earlier, the future of the earth and civilization is greatly influenced by how the colonialism matrix works. Social Design as a design intervention effort for the benefit of humans interests (Margolin & Margolin, 2002) can easily fall into the practice of tokenism if it is not really carried out with precise alignments.

Currently, the practice of social design has often been biased and fallen into public image building by designers and the party behind it. This is because the practice is still under the auspices of the oppressive western ontology. Within this framework, design often positions people as a group that must be saved, levelled up, or even empowered. This situation seems to put design as a tool to 'liberate'. The concept that Mignolo often refers to as an attempt of rewesternization and should to delinking.

Furthermore, Mignolo (2011) offers the concept of "communal" as a form of resistance to delinking the rewesternization agenda. Thus the communal concept means trying to shifting of western capitalist modernism. That there is another way outside the framework of the West. One of the things Mignolo emphasizes is moving out of the myth of "economic development", or in popular parlance, "progress" and "Development". This point becomes very important related to the existence of social design. So far, innovation through the practice of social design often leads to an increase in people's economic level. This condition is evidence that social design work has not been able to escape the western ontology. On the other side, there is another way that can be achieved, which is to achieve economic adequacy, meaning there is no need continuously to pursue economic improvement or progress. Economic progress always implies the nature of "greedy", which is ended up by damage to the natural and social environment.

Therefore, the future of social design needs to break away from the concept of "economic progress". On the other hand, the offer of the "communal" concept becomes interesting because its roots have long been practised in various parts of the world in the pre-modern-capitalistic era. This communal concept is not a derivative of the concept of "the common wealth", which is typical of capitalism, nor the concept of "common", which is rooted in Communism. Both ideas are still rooted in western ontology as the dominant force. On the other hand, communal is a decolonization practice rooted in local ideas and breaking away from the West colonial framework.

In the real practice of social design, the communal concept can be seen in the collective form carried out in several countries, for example, collective practice in Latin America, India, and also in Indonesia. Some collective practices in Indonesia can be found in some art collectives (e.g. Ruang Rupa, Taring Padi, and Hysteria). In addition, there are also collectives of farmers and factory workers. The author's observation of these collectives, with various notes, can be said to be an old practice that existed in pre-western Indonesian society. The activities of producing goods and services in the daily life of our society are integrated with various other practices, ranging from arts, worship, and even entertainment. The focus of production is not on efforts to increase economic progress but the balance of meeting needs with the sustainability of the natural environment.

If we align with the Mingolo's decoloniality concept, the communal concept in Indonesia, through the collective movement, could be one of the best practices that deserves to be proposed as a basic idea for future social design practices.

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Communal will also provide more significant space for groups that have been marginalized in public affairs. The progress-oriented framework of the "saviour" of the Western model often requires sacrifices from some groups of society to achieve development goals. For example, in Indonesia, marginal groups are often victims, such as indigenous peoples, urban poor groups, farmers, and so on. They are required to sacrifice for reasons of national development interests. Perhaps, at the development policy level, social design strategies and innovations with communal concepts can be an alternative or even advocacy power to offset the "greed" of the capitalistic development model.

CONCLUSION

The practice of Social Design has been trying to solve social and environmental problems through design interventions. It's just that the implementation framework still cannot be separated from Western ontologies, which tend to be oppressive. Moreover, the West's obsession with economic progress through development makes many groups sacrifice to achieve progress. The concept of decoloniality offers a framework of social design practice that is liberated from its oppressive nature.

Decoloniality is rooted in non-capitalist practices that already existed in many areas in the pre-modern era. Referring to Mignolo, the concept is called Communal. Establishing the future social design framework using the concept of decoloniality is an attempt to counteract the rewesternization of the West wants to maintain its hegemony. This effort is clearly essential to do to keep the earth and the world a no worse place. Decoloniality is a way to treat and cure the earth from the greedy practice of capitalistic development.

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