

# Modes of Collectivity in Materials Research

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#modes of collectivity #mapping negotiations  
#participatory actions  
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In the past decade, a lively abundance of experimental materials research evolved in and around international arts and design school environments. Emerging from mainly formerly commodity focussed design disciplines such as Industrial, Textile, and Fashion Design, students and lecturers put their attention to the design of materials in order to develop approaches of unlearning exploitative relations with matter and to find new modes towards responsible making. While the projects do not lack of critical material thinking, deal with more-than-human agency, and engage with for example accessibilities of resources, material cycles, hands-on methods and substitutions of petroleum-based plastics, modes of connecting material experimentations to the social-political realities of

their implementation outside of the educational environment or art market are still rare.

Even though the materials design movement is not lacking of networks and exchange among its stakeholders, platforms, museums, and other cultural institutions, building infrastructures that connect critical socio-material speculations to industries and policy making transpire to be a rather complex task. Reasons for this do not solely lie in insufficient general access or a lack of recognition of design methods and change in terms of interdisciplinary material-based research between academia and industry can be observed in recent years. It is rather that the challenges with regard to current debates around responsibility in material design are revealed in the very situated actions in-between landscapes, laboratories, productions, institutions, households, or landfills. What it means to act responsibly becomes a process of negotiation in terms of access, knowledge, liveliness and co-existence on a larger scale than finding a design solution.

Against this backdrop, design anthropological research modes are emerging that seek to investigate more-than-human relationships and new forms of responsible interactions. The phenomenon of Viktor Papanek's rediscovery in this context is no coincidence, as the questions of current debates in design are seemingly similar. However, differences appear in the understandings of collectivity and collective making when we shift the perspective from product to material.

In my talk, I intend to first map out current modes of collectivity in materials design research and design anthropology that can be understood as negotiations in-between responsible making, participatory action and more-than-human agency, followed by a discussion of what collective critical making would mean in the design processes of materials based on minerals that are perceived as inanimate matter in the materials science. The investigation of these so-called technological materials in the context of design anthropological methodologies open up debates in regard to different understandings of design.

The mapping is part of a current PhD research project investigating notions of access and collectivity in the becomings of technological materials between materials science and design anthropology.