

# ACTIVISM IN DESIGN

## HOW TO INTEGRATE ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS INTO THE DESIGN PROCESS

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*PAPER ABSTRACT: This visual paper aims to understand and address the lack of equity and inclusion in the current design process, and the disconnect it has caused between designers' personal values and beliefs and the work they do for their jobs. The design industry is dominated by Eurocentric design, failing to address many social issues society faces, such as racial and gender inequality, climate change, inaccessibility and poverty. As countries around the world face a reckoning with racial injustices and systemic oppression, many design practitioners have started to rethink their roles and responsibilities in our society. What can we learn from activism to transform our way of problem solving to ensure a more equitable and inclusive outcome? This visual paper shares the learnings from a conversation series that strives to understand the intersection between design and social issues, and breaks down a few opportunities in the current design process to evolve design thinking by incorporating elements of social movements.*

*Keywords: Design activism, decolonize design, inclusive design, design process, equity design*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The design process was established to guide designers through a course of actions to create changes to an intended audience. However, the current design process perpetuates competition over collectivism, encouraging companies to innovate towards winning over other companies instead of contributing to the overall human conditions; the lack of the inclusion of the intended audience throughout the design process causes the outcome to be misaligned with what the users have wanted, and a series of other social issues [7]; the emphasis on the revenue generation [5] and customer adoption being the main key performance metrics for businesses causes the companies to neglect the importance of community building and engagement.

To study the intersection between design and social issues, a conversation series through a podcast was initiated to better understand how designers' roles play into shaping our social structure, and brainstorm ways to integrate elements of social movements into our design process to create a more equitable and inclusive future.

Questions that informed this visual paper:

- 1) What do design and activism have in common?



Figure 1. The intersection between design and activism.

2) How to integrate activism into the design process to create more inclusive and equitable outcomes?



Figure 2. How to integrate activism into the design process.

3) How to connect designers' personal values and beliefs with their daily jobs?

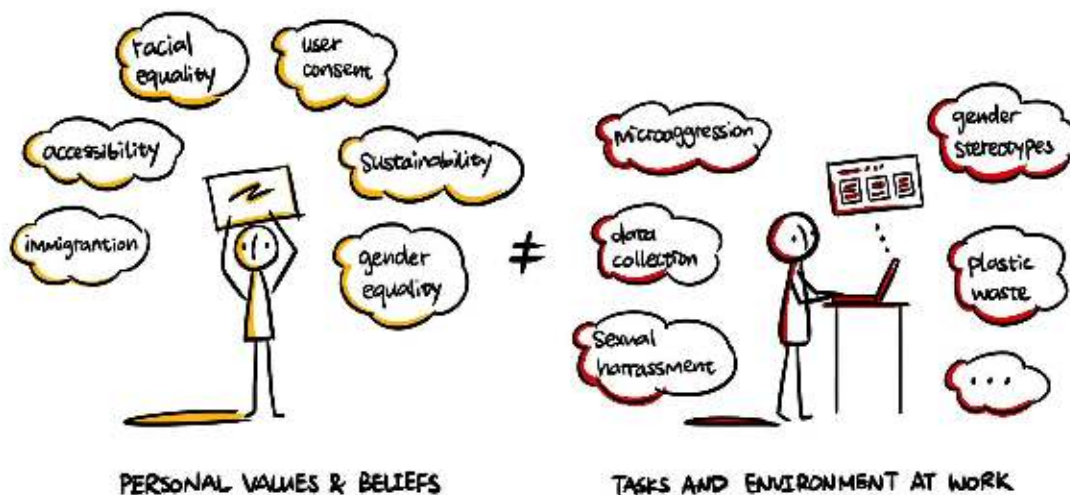


Figure 3. The disconnect between designers' personal values and beliefs and their daily jobs.

## 2. METHODS AND PROCESSES

The following visual explains the methods and process it takes to conduct each conversation series to understand the intersection between design and a particular social issue.

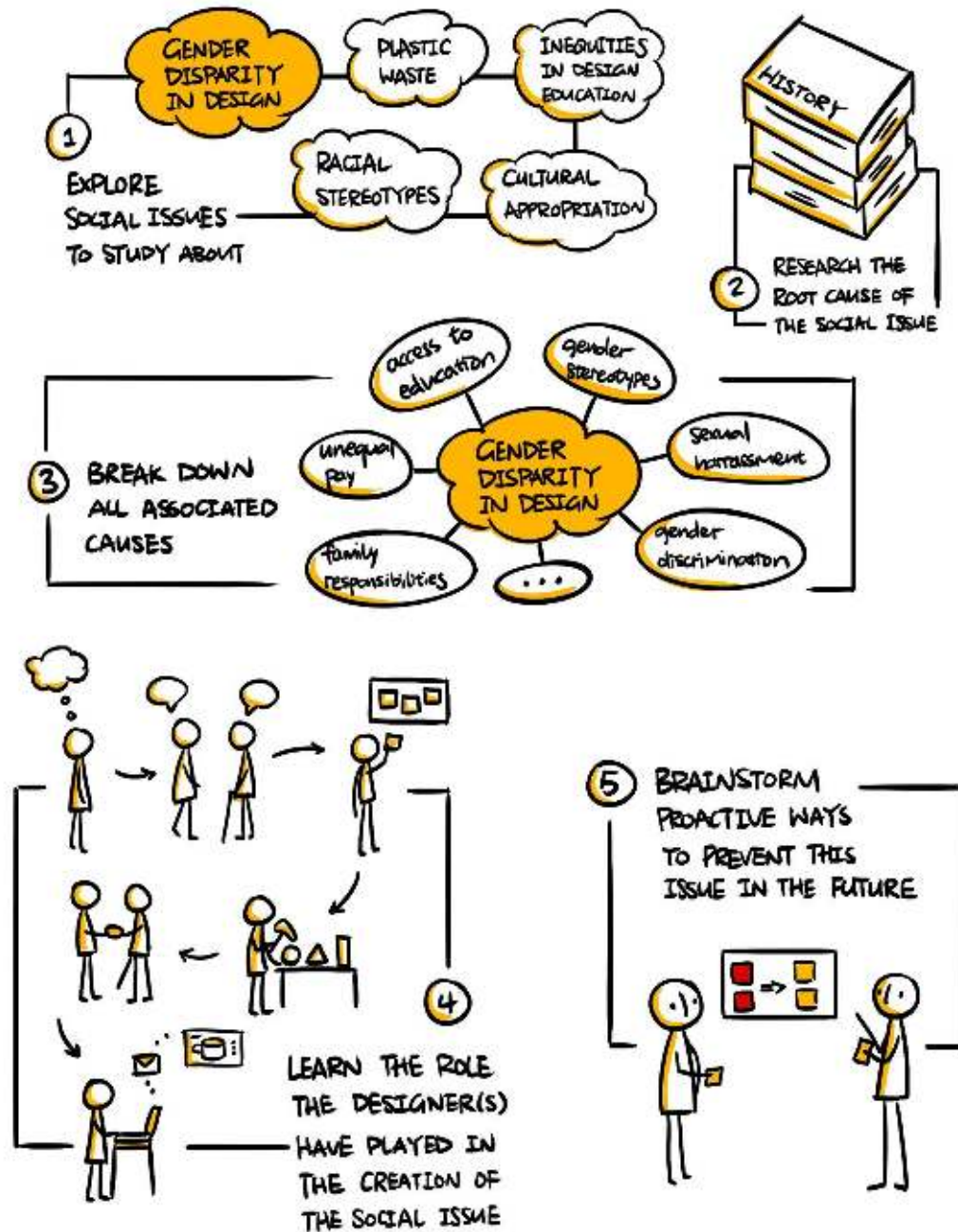


Figure 4. The process of understanding the intersection between design and social issues.

### 3. MARKET ANALYSIS

The following visual breaks down the current design process. [4]

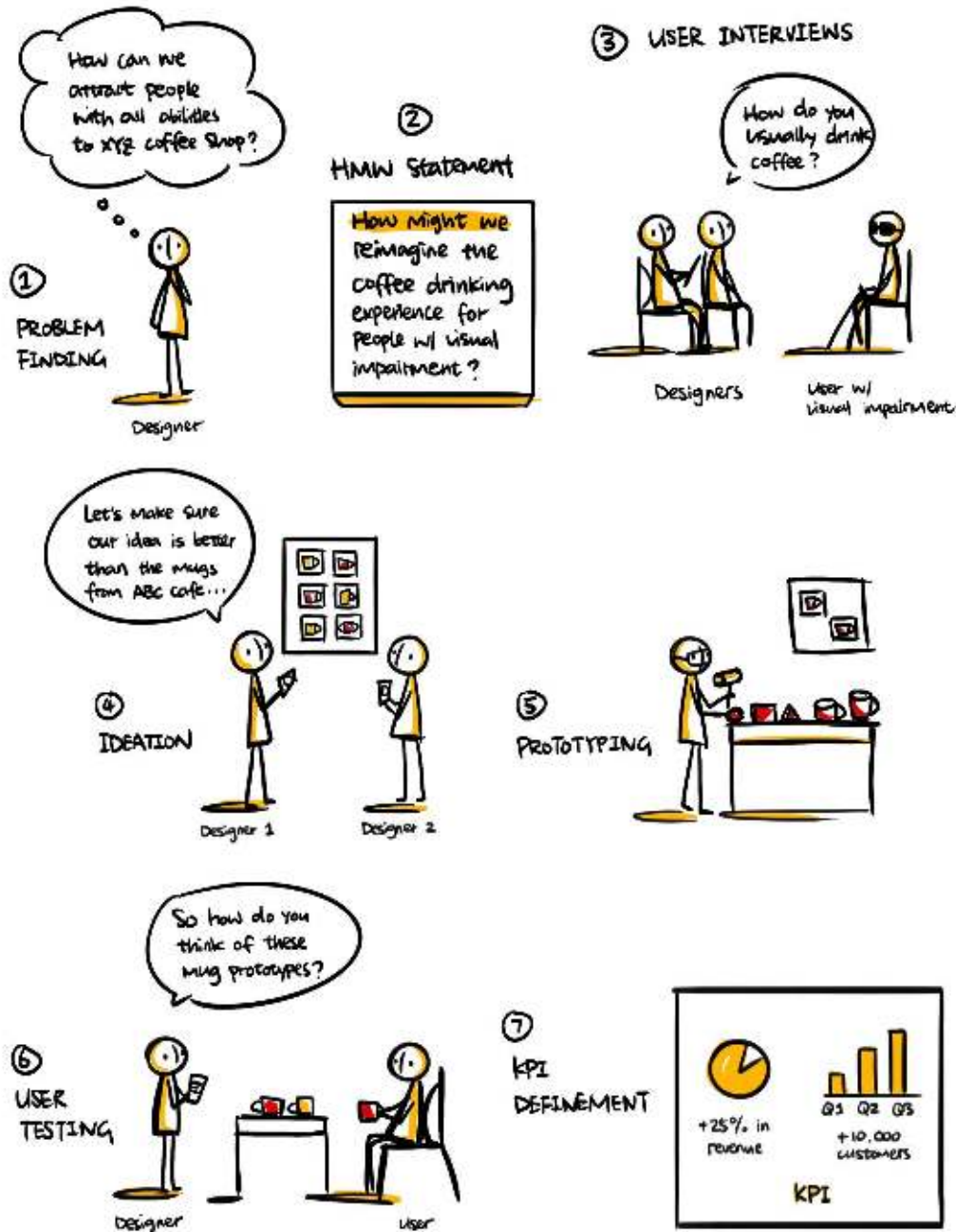


Figure 5. The current design process.

The following visual breaks down the process of creating a social movement. [1][2]

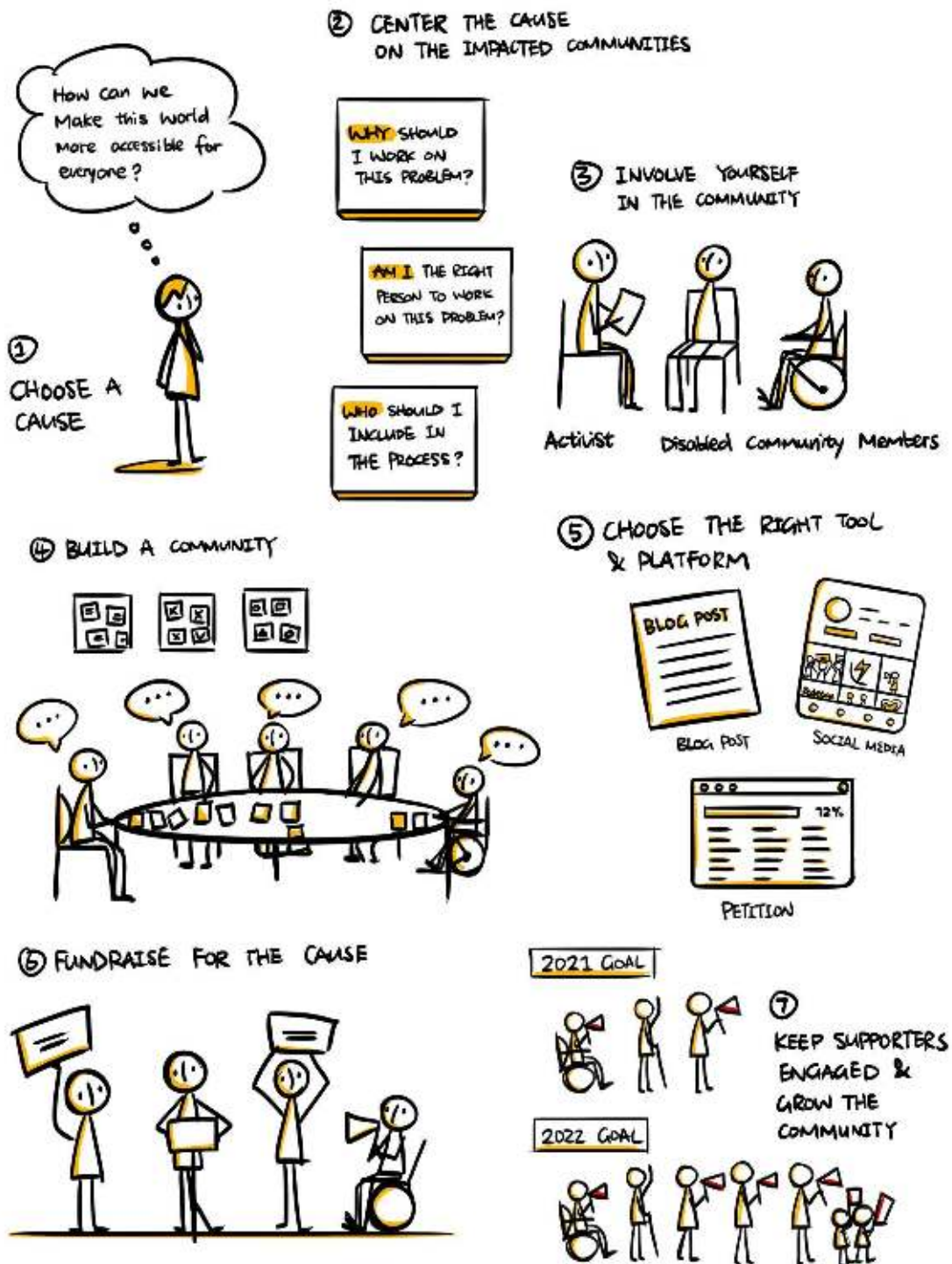


Figure 6. The process of creating a social movement.

#### 4. DISCUSSIONS

The following visual shows a reimagined design process by incorporating elements of activism. [2][6][8]

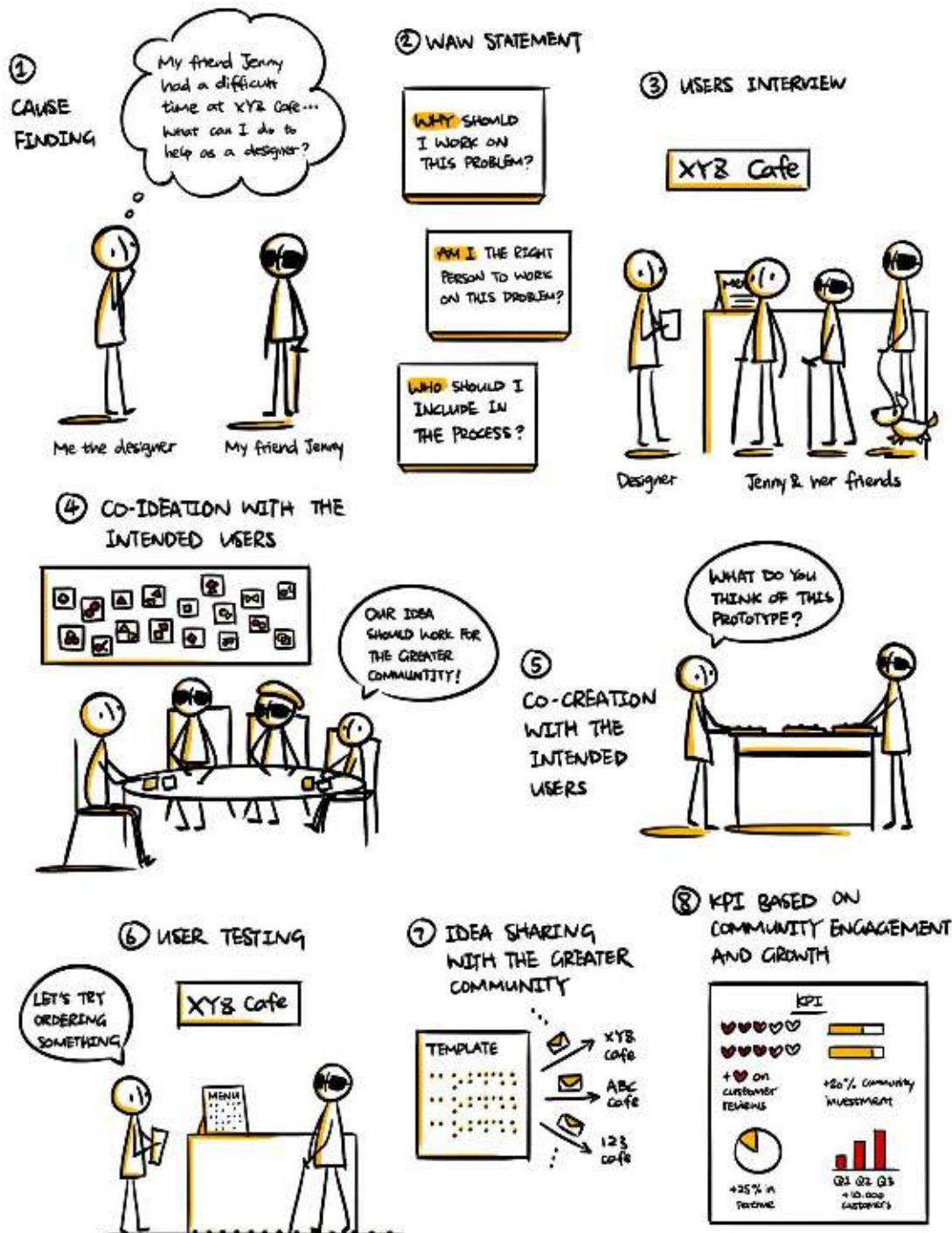


Figure 7. Reimagined design process with elements of social movements.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Design can be used as a framework for change, just like activism. As we continue to challenge our social norms and redefine our social structures, we need to constantly reevaluate our design process to make sure it is evolving towards where the society is going.

As designers we bring a unique set of skills to apply to our shared human experiences, which means the work we put into the world comes with a tremendous number of responsibilities [7]. When we center our design process on the intended audience instead of ourselves, move from empathizing with the users to including them throughout the process [3], work towards collectivism instead of competition, and prioritize success based on community values over business revenue, we can start to create more equitable and inclusive outcomes.

## REFERENCES

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