

Interim Conclusion

Open attitudes within the graphic craft possess capacities of accessible, democratic methodologies, with significantly reduced barriers to entry, actively counteracting vendor lock-in. These approaches leverage diverse contributions, innovation, and creativity unrestricted by the singular interests of corporate entities. The use of free and open source resources on a global scale can empower creatives from diverse backgrounds, providing access to essential design elements. This approach promises to democratize design skills, allowing individuals to learn and develop without financial constraints, even more amplified by the widespread reach of the internet. Open concepts exhibit adaptability to various cultural contexts and socio-cultural landscapes thereby encouraging the development of design solutions that are not only more inclusive but also more attuned to diverse perspectives. Although free and open operations may not comprehensively resolve broader economic and social inequality, or even mitigate issues such as challenging working conditions within design studio practices, they can provide degrees of individual empowerment and autonomy, in defiance of negatively interceding interests. The challenge to the status quo – both materially and economically – and the transformation of the overall design paradigm, conceptualization, and aesthetics, characterize the designers and visual artists emerging out of these open environments

However, open design practice sometimes still resembles a fate akin to Don Quixote. Despite its highly reasonable intentions and an even larger potential for social justice, its effectiveness remains questionable – at least in the context of professional, fast-paced, graphic design industry. Many of their resources still lack industry recognition, suffer from compatibility issues, and often prove to be either limited or too complex in their execution, resulting in laboriously crafted, yet occasionally (subjectively) middling work.

Upon my research, many of their communities still appear small and fragmented and often too niche. Their methods and philosophy sometimes seem to face more scorn than actual serious and deep consideration among fellow graphic designers, despite all grappling with these analogical sets of challenges. Maintaining a delicate balance of resources essential for the project's sustainability and growth tends to be a tedious and sometimes simply insufficient effort.

Still, from an idealistic standpoint, their intentions hold validity. Perhaps their destiny is not sealed yet, and, moreover, these shortcomings cannot be entirely blamed on open communities alone anyway. The transformation of the professional world necessitates more than the efforts of a handful of volunteers; It seems like designers must embrace more openness for these concepts to be largely effective. Practicing openness in their worldview, openness in their design standards, and more critical analysis of their working conditions, and of all the contributing key factors. In my opinion, there needs to be a way for proprietary quality resources and open practices to coexist, uniformly appreciated but acknowledged as uniquely distinct pathways, nonetheless effective in their own right.

As of now, working without the use of any proprietary software – a work skill I rigorously had to internalize during these years of my formal design studies – has been incredibly empowering. Knowing that I am able to engage in graphic design craftsmanship regardless of any (financial) situation I might face, so long as my access to a working computer and solid internet connection is ensured, is undoubtedly reassuring. Nevertheless, my open source based graphic work has proven to be significantly more laborious, slow, and complex. Regardless, this does not mean that I will never consider using these methodologies again. Quite the opposite, hopefully even professionally. In future, I am willing to work with

them, but also work on them, creating an improved free and open workflow. I would like to further engage, exchange, and perhaps even establish open source graphic design initiatives, connecting and somehow “unionizing” with fellow graphic designers working in the field. This would serve as a means to actively counter the aforementioned deficiency and fragmentation of efforts involved in the improvements of open source toolkits; through actively engaging in technical openness as a graphic designer.

I have already contacted several open source graphic design collectives, offering more engagement; unfortunately, my emails remain unanswered as of yet. I will try again soon.