

Design & Observation

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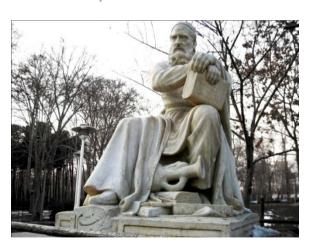
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The author of this book Mohsen Jaafarnia is an Iranian designer, researcher and teacher. He has deep respect for Hakim Omar Khayyam, who was a Persian poet, philosopher, mathematician and astronomer, who also wrote treatises on mechanics, geography, mineralogy, music, climatology and theology. He dedicates this book to his great spirit. Citing Hakim Omar Khayyam's poetry,

Were it not folly, Spider-like to spin * The Thread of present Life away to win-

What? For ourselves, who know not if we shall * Breathe out the Very Breath we now breathe in!



Introduction

The Persian proverb which says, "Starting of any work and task is half of the task done" in reality motivated the entire spirit of this book. Along with this, my experience involving the problems faced by the university students who often find themselves in a fix while narrowing down on a topic concerning most small and big academic projects and assignments in beginning of every semester, also made me begin this book. The students would often spent phenomenal time and energy to get down to a single topic while ironically all students can simply choose a topic in a simple review right at the first meeting of the class

This inspired me to collect a set of observations which primarily consists of problems of user's from around the world. Since the number of problems is varied and very large in numbers, hence only a certain number of them have been assimilated in this small book. In these observations we can deduce that everyone interacts automatically with forms & spaces that one comes across regularly. Some of these forms & spaces have qualities which can prompt everyone to behave in specific ways.

As man is a creative creature, we see in his behavior the optimum use of opportunities present in his immediate surroundings. When man takes advantage of aesthetical, physiological, technical and economical function, this creative behavior leads to create an intelligent idea.

The topic which we want to select is not restricted to a specific activity. The starting point of every project which is related to product or space needs the element of curiosity that develops while performing a continual process of observation. Everyone can find a need which arises from a problem but in the nascent stages of topic selection, everyone must understand the need by simply observing the behavior of people in their natural settings.

It helps us find the need, on which the topic is gradually built on. This purpose can be served by visiting a park or using a metro. An assortment of these observations may provoke curiosity and encourage us to interpret the situation which could well provide the inspiration necessary for developing a topic.

The ability to observe is important, not simply to watch, but to observe. How do individuals actually interact with their environments and make modifications on the products that were intended to be used in a certain way? Observational triggers are often necessary to identify a possible direction which could occur anywhere and at anytime; Triggers may be subconscious observations or deliberate choices.

Images and artifacts that are collected could be a invaluable source of inspiration which can prompt further discussion and direction. Reference to these images help designers to be more sensitive to people's experience and behavior. This elaborates on the importance of witnessing the behavior of users that can be important when they use opportunities to move and challenge the limitation.

As we know many products are massproduced and are often the case that the artifact has been developed in such a way which bears a unique impression on the user. But it is not possible to summarize whether the design is good or bad. When user observes or uses a product, it is probably impossible to get everyone to agree on whether a design is good or bad from a subjective standpoint.

Suppose it is possible to categorize a product as being good or bad on the basis of being fit for a purpose, it means the design can resolve the needs of user. But we can see many individuals still continue making changes on the design; the alterations of which may appear to be occasionally bizarre and the owner has felt it necessary, for whatever reason, to execute the changes no matter how small.

It is important to observe such alterations to evaluate why they have been conducted. There may be many reasons to warrant changes including sentimental, practical and desirable.

Exploring and understanding these user refinements can assist in developing a product and address these problems with home-redesigned products which provides a valuable insight into what the user wants and offers an opportunity to improve or refine these simple versions.

Here user proceeds to home-redesign to use the new product in requirement oriented ways. It is interesting to know that the range of home-redesigned products is (solutions developed by the user for the user self) also broad.

Ofdesigners can do course observation along with an analysis which can provide a better review of the behavior of the user. For this purpose a designer must do the review with the potential of imagination in the following steps. Do not forget that imagination is more important. Albert Einstein (1929)As savs "Imagination is more important knowledge. Knowledge limited. is Imagination encircles the world."

The related analyze is as follows:

- 1) Reviewing full cycle activity while using the product just once by the user.
- 2) Reviewing full cycle activity while using the product 24 hours by the user.
- 3) Reviewing full cycle activity while using the product only a week by the user.

Designers must also be aware of the fact that he must not resolve some of the user's needs owing to certain reasons pertaining to safety, legality, morality and cultural values etc. However the user has an intense desire to resolve these needs which he might be having on the count of not having enough information about the reasons. For example, the need of making more people use an elevator having a capacity of only four people. And now based on this scale we can divide needs into two parts:

1) **Real needs** - The real needs are the kind of requirements that do not have any problem associated with safety, legality, morality, cultural values etc. For example the need to button cloths quickly led to the design of a zipper.

2) **Abnormal needs** - This category includes harmful requirements, which could pose a threat to safety, legality, morality and cultural values etc. These needs are essential for the designers to eradicate bad habits of users. For example:

A- Abnormal needs could pose a threat on the safety of the users. For example, Bicycle is a two-wheeled vehicle designed for one person.

But some users tend to carry another passenger on the top of the bicycle's tube. To avoid this, designers have placed the cable hanger and cable from under the top tube and placed it above the top tube which makes the tube uncomfortable for the passenger to sit.











B- Some needs also arise from bad habits, which is culturally unsound. One should not forget that designers have certain responsibilities towards parents, teachers, writers and media. This is because receivers (user) tend to have many questions and are often cynical about things learnt from others which include parents, teachers, writers and media. They also tend to question as to 'why one should follow these messages'.

However he (user) follows any message that a product delivers without any question. For example the previous design of bench, which was a product designed for four people to sit, but if someone tries to use it like a bed which is often done (Sleeping on a bench is a bad habit often found in parks or railway station). The designer here has put an armrest in the middle part of the bench to create a barrier for sleeping. Therefore designers in the long run could change this habit simply by adding armrests.

C- Some of needs do not create any problem for the users but is harmful for other people and creatures that could have some sort of relation with the product.

For example, users often tend to release extra noise in cars by punching the exhaust of the car, which creates extra noise outside the car. This noise can be very irritating for the pedestrians outside, while the person inside the car is quite unaware of the noise.

D- Some needs may also have legal issues for the user. In every society there are certain rules to be adhered to. For instance possessing a switchblade is forbidden in Iran, whereas at the same time it is permissible to have a fruit knife. Though both the switchblade and fruit knife have sharp edges and are used for cutting, yet the slight difference in their designs makes a huge difference.

The switchblade is fast to open and can be used by people to defend themselves or even hurt others (it's automation has the ability of opening fast and its thick blade with a sharp point can actually hurt others) while on the other hand, a fruit knife is often used for peeling fruits with its thin round point often assumed to be less dangerous as the switchblade.

Let's see observations

Finally, I conclude my discussion with a poem of Mewlana Jalal ad Din Muhammad Balkhi (Rumi) and invite you to see the collection of pictures:

Know and understand the problems of others.

And then, go ahead and help them.

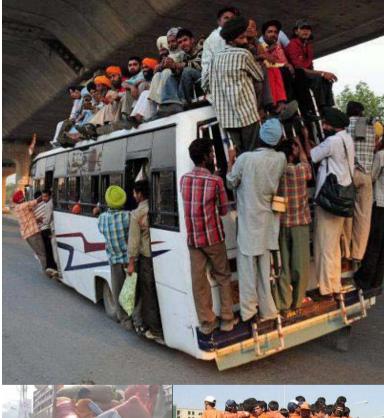














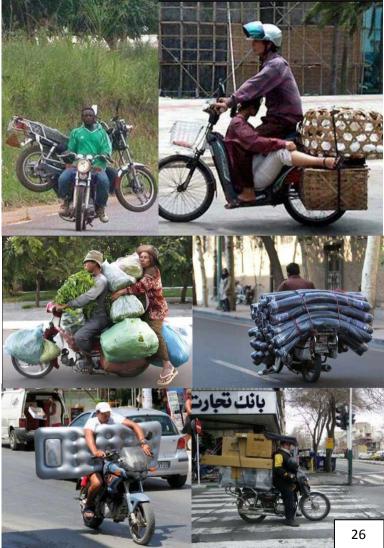




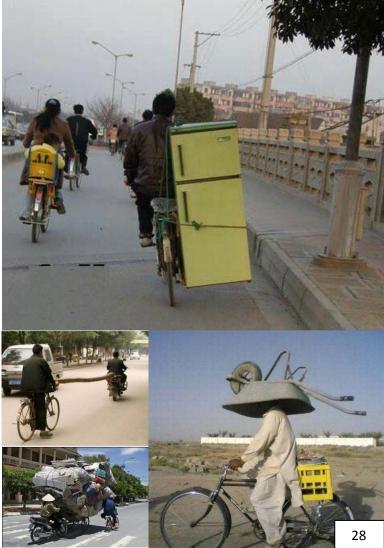




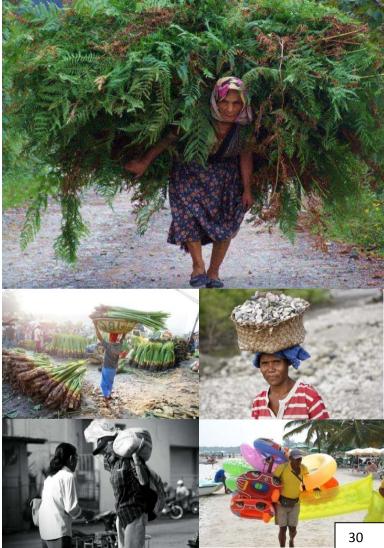




























































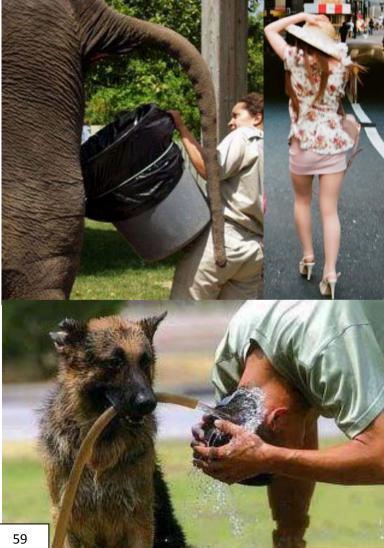




























































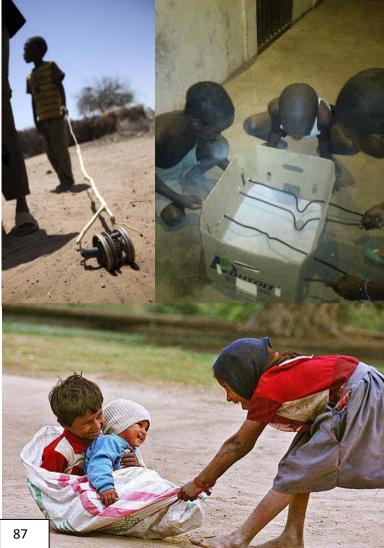








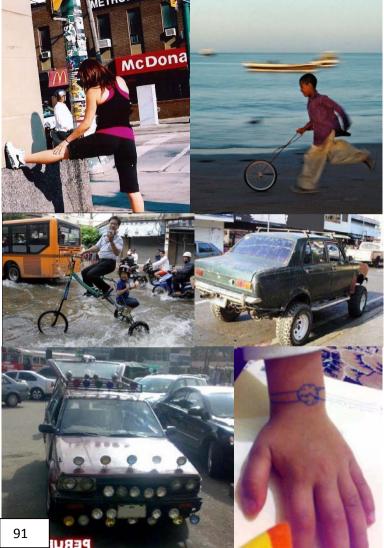


















































































































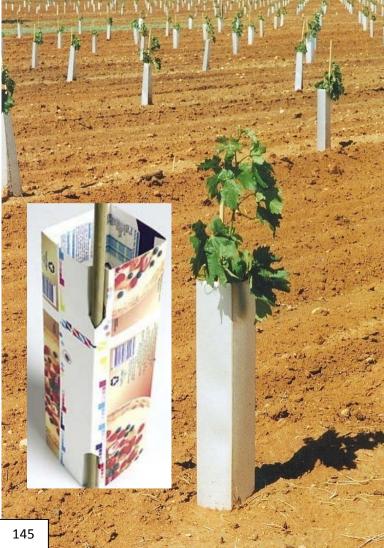






























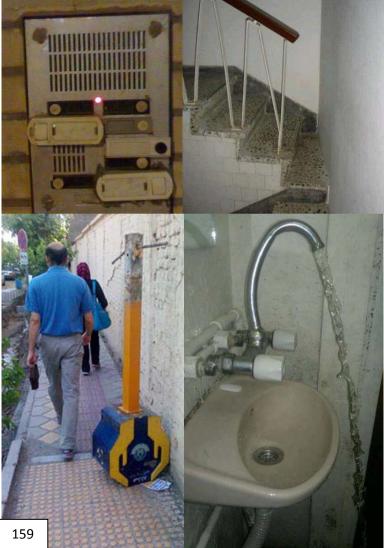








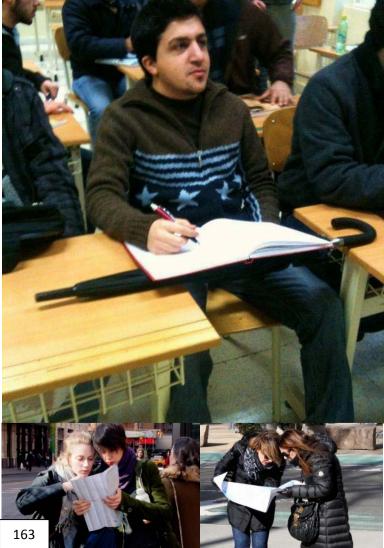






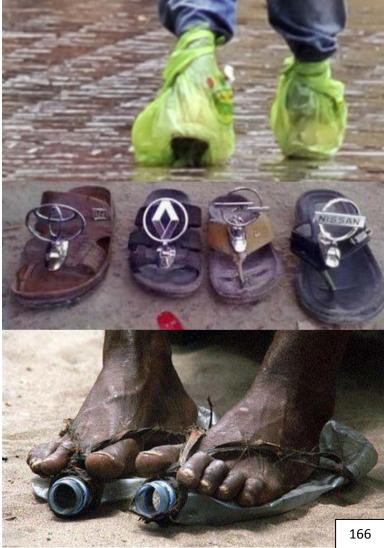






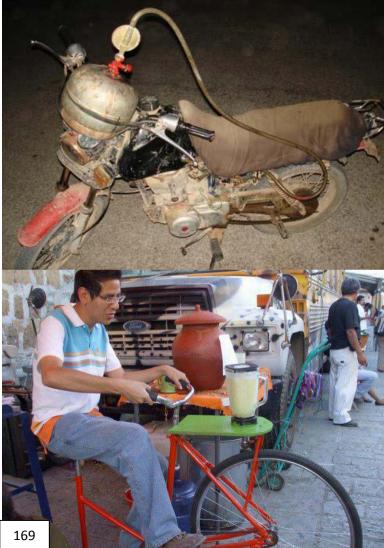






























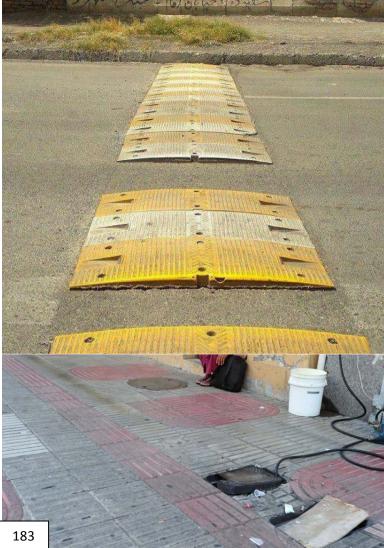










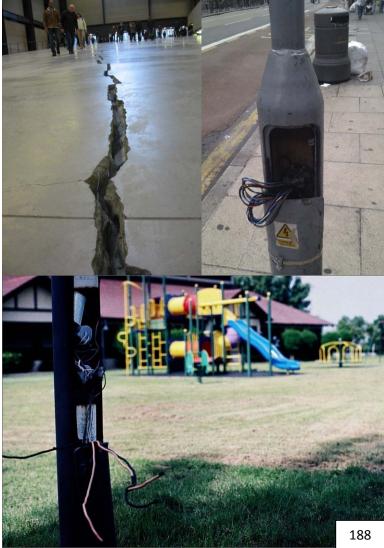




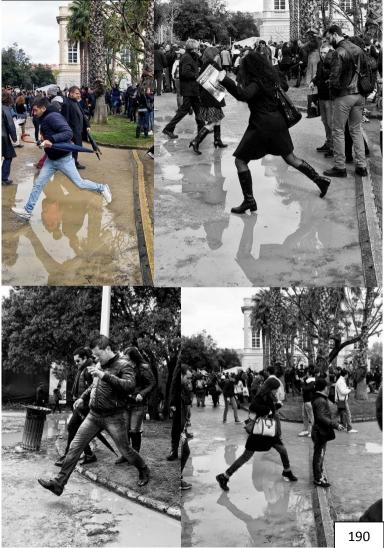






















































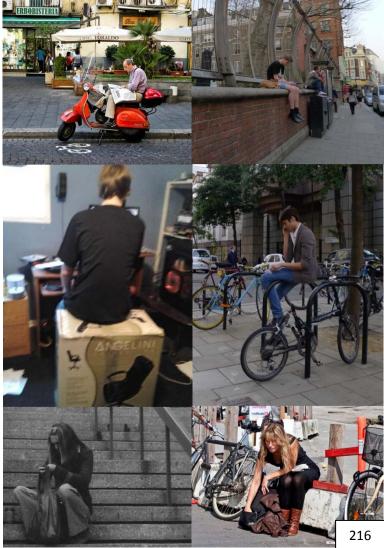








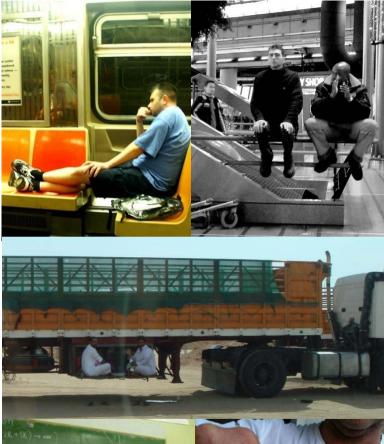














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