

## DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY IN GRAPHIC DESIGN MANIFESTOS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BASED ON CRITICAL DISCOURSE THEORY

### GRAFİK TASARIM MANİFESTOLARINDA SÖYLEM VE İDEOLOJİ: ELEŞTİREL SÖYLEM ANALİZİ YAKLAŞIMIYLA KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR İNCELEME

Orhun Türker\*

#### Abstract

This study examines five fundamental manifestos that have created significant turning points in the field of graphic design—First Things First (1964), First Things First 2000, An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth (1998), The Decolonising Design Manifesto (2019) and The Karlskrona Manifesto for Sustainability Design (2014)—using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In addition to defining aesthetic tendencies, manifestos are also known to be a discursive tool that reveals ideological conflicts and calls the designer subject to certain positions. The theoretical foundation of the study is based on Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse model, Althusser's ideology and interpellation theory, Foucault's knowledge/power relations, and van Dijk's ideological discourse analysis. The analyses demonstrate that manifestos produce ideological structures at textual, discursive, and social levels. In this context, it can be said that the study demonstrates that graphic design manifestos also function as ethical, political, and cultural intervention tools.

**Keywords:** Graphic Design Manifestos, Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology and Design, Political Visual Culture.

#### Öz

Bu çalışma, grafik tasarım alanında önemli kırılma noktaları oluşturan beş temel manifestoyu—First Things First (1964), First Things First 2000, An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth (1998), The Decolonising Design Manifesto (2019) ve The Karlskrona Manifesto for Sustainability Design (2014)—Eleştirel Söylem Analizi (ESA) yöntemiyle incelemektedir. Manifestoların estetik eğilimleri tanımlamasının yanı sıra, ideolojik çatışmaları görünür kılan ve tasarımcı öznesini belirli konumlara çağıran söylemsel bir araç olduğu da bilinmektedir. Çalışmanın kuramsal temeli; Fairclough'un üç boyutlu söylem modeli, Althusser'in ideoloji ve çağrılama kuramı, Foucault'nun bilgi/iktidar ilişkileri ve van Dijk'in ideolojik söylem çözümlemelerine dayanmaktadır. Analizler, manifestoların metinsel, söylemsel ve toplumsal düzeylerde ideolojik yapılar ürettiğini göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda çalışmanın, grafik tasarım manifestolarının etik, politik ve kültürel müdahale araçları olarak da işlev gördüğünü gösterir nitelikte olduğu söylenebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Grafik Tasarım Manifestoları, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi, İdeoloji ve Tasarım, Politik Görsel Kültür.

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Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding author  
E-mail:

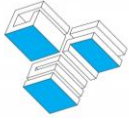
turkerorhun@gmail.com

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\* Doç., Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi, Grafik Sanatlar, turkerorhun@gmail.com, Orcid: 0000-0001-5106-570X



## 1. Introduction

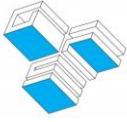
The field of graphic design is a multilayered discipline that cannot be reduced to the mere production of aesthetic form. Extending beyond the technical aspects of visual communication, this field encompasses cultural, social, and ideological meaning-making, and possesses the capacity to reproduce its own discourse and subjectivity, particularly through graphic design manifestos. Manifestos are discursive texts that historically emerge during moments of crisis, transformation, or rupture, functioning as collective responses to such moments. In this context, manifestos not only define aesthetic orientations but also embody a political stance, present an ethical call, and operate as proposals for cultural intervention (Yanoshevsky, 2009; Triggs, 2006).

In the design literature, manifesto texts are generally classified according to historical periodization, aesthetic tendencies, or formal characteristics (Poynor, 2003; Heller & Vienne, 2015). However, studies that analyze the ideological structures of these texts remain limited. Yet, when evaluated through Althusser's (1971) theory of "ideological interpellation," the manifesto appears as a powerful ideological apparatus that places individuals in specific subject positions and compels them to internalize social roles. Graphic design manifestos construct the designer not only as a form-giver but as an ethical subject, a social actor, and a political agent.

This process of discursive reconstruction is directly related to the discursive formations defined by Foucault (1972) in the context of knowledge and power relations. According to Foucault, discourse goes beyond representing reality; it is a means through which power is reproduced via the production of knowledge. In this sense, manifestos reveal which forms of knowledge are centralized, which epistemologies are legitimized, and which subjectivities are produced. When considered through Foucault's concept of "normalization," graphic design manifestos both propose a particular design approach and construct the figure of the "ideal designer" in normative terms.

On the other hand, van Dijk's (2006) model of ideological discourse analysis is functional in understanding how manifestos draw ideological boundaries through binary oppositions such as "us and them." While confronting hegemonic structures within the field of graphic design—such as market-oriented approaches—manifestos aim to position the designer outside these structures. In this sense, design manifestos function as calls for aesthetic transformation while also serving as texts that contest discursive hegemony.

In this study, five frequently referenced manifestos in the field of graphic design—First Things First (1964), First Things First 2000, An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth (1998), Decolonising Design Manifesto (2018), and The Karlskrona Manifesto for Sustainability Design (2014)—are examined to analyze how these texts construct designer subjectivity through specific discursive strategies,



which ideological conflicts they render visible, and which hegemonic structures they attempt to intervene in, using the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

The analysis is conducted based on Norman Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional CDA model, examining the manifestos on textual (use of modality, lexical choices, pronominal structures, metaphors), discursive practice (distribution, circulation, reception), and social practice levels (political context, historical moment, ideological oppositions). Furthermore, following Machin and Mayr's (2012) multimodal CDA approach, the typographic, visual, and layout features of the manifestos are also evaluated in terms of discursive power strategies.

This study asserts that graphic design manifestos should not be understood solely as texts that refer to professional principles, but rather as discourses shaped by ideological conflicts, negotiating with cultural hegemony, and reconstructing subject positions. In doing so, it aims to contribute to design history from a critical, cultural, and political perspective.

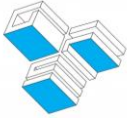
## **2. The Historical Development and Societal Context of Design Manifestos**

Graphic design manifestos should not only be viewed as texts that guide visual culture production, but also as ideological documents that emerge in times of social crisis. Historically, these texts have functioned as discursive interventions in response to ruptures, transformations, and resistance practices within the fields of art and design. Analyzing manifestos within their historical context is essential for understanding how designer subjectivity is constructed, through which cultural codes it is legitimized, and how these texts respond to broader societal transformations (Yanoshevsky, 2009; Triggs, 2006).

### **2.1 The Modernist Period and the Bauhaus Manifesto**

The early 20th century witnessed profound restructurings in the fields of art and design, largely shaped by the devastation of post-war destruction. One of the most striking texts of this period is the Bauhaus Manifesto (1919), written by Walter Gropius. The Bauhaus school, aiming to unite industrial production with artistic creativity after the war, advocated for a redefinition of art based on functionality and social utility (Whitford, 1984). Gropius's manifesto coded design as a tool "in the service of society" and proposed an ideology that integrated aesthetic production into everyday life (Elder, 2015). This discourse reflects the modernist utopia of the time, which sought to reconstruct the individual within a new cultural atmosphere (Droste, 2002).

In this context, the Bauhaus Manifesto contains not only the foundations of an educational program but also a political discourse that redefines the designer's role within society. The discourse of modernist ideology—based on rationality, universality, and progress—constructed design as a highly technical field while reducing the individual to a functional subject within this structure (Findeli, 1995). Gropius's language is discursively framed with technical terminology and centers on labor and production relations. Considered through Althusser's (1971) theory of



ideological interpellation, the Bauhaus Manifesto positions the designer as a component of the system of production and 'calls' them into this role.

## **2.2 The 1960s: Social Responsibility and the Discourse of Critical Design**

The 1960s marked a period of rising social movements, during which global concerns such as civil rights, environmental awareness, and anti-war activism reverberated strongly within the fields of art and design. One of the most influential design manifestos of this era is *First Things First*, published by Ken Garland in 1964. In this text, Garland argued that designers should redirect their talents away from commercial advertising and toward projects that serve social good (Garland, 1964). The language of the manifesto is characterized by strong expressions of obligation; phrases such as “we must” and “we have a responsibility” attribute a clear ethical duty to the designer (Helfand, 2001). This manifesto operates discursively as an effort to produce counter-hegemony. Analyzed through the lens of van Dijk’s (2006) theory of discourse and ideology, *First Things First* foregrounds an alternative system of values in opposition to the dominant neoliberal discourse of advertising. Within this framework, the designer is redefined not as a tool of consumer culture, but as an agent of social transformation (Triggs, 2006). Interpreted through Althusser’s theory of interpellation, the manifesto “hails” the designer into an activist subject position, and the rhetorical articulation of this call reveals the discursive force of the text.

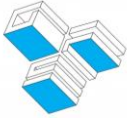
## **2.3 Postmodernism and the Reinterpretation of Visual Rhetoric**

Following the 1980s, the advent of postmodernism brought a shift away from definitive ideological orientations toward multiplicity, fragmentation, and irony. This rupture was also reflected in graphic design manifestos. A key text from this period is *An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth* (1998) by Bruce Mau. Mau’s manifesto proposes an approach that breaks with traditional rules, champions experimentation, and emphasizes process. By celebrating individual creative potential, it positions the designer not outside the system but as an agent embedded within and contributing to transformation (Poynor, 2003).

At this stage, manifestos began to generate discourses centered on personal experience and internal transformation. According to Foucault’s (1972) discourse theory, postmodern manifestos do not stabilize relations of knowledge and power but instead multiply them, rendering them open to interpretation. Mau’s language, shaped by imperative constructions, evokes a sense of “constructive anarchy,” reconfiguring both the aesthetic and the political dimensions of design discourse (Triggs, 2006).

## **2.4 Post-2000: Ecosocial Sensibility and Activist Manifestos**

Since the 2000s, critical global issues such as climate change, income inequality, and postcolonial identity crises have reshaped the ideological orientations of designers. *First Things First 2000* exemplifies this shift by foregrounding environmental concerns and social justice, arguing that design must serve not only functional but also ethical purpose (Poynor, 1999). Similarly, initiatives



like Decolonising Design (Ansari et al., 2019) challenge Western-centric design norms, advocating for local knowledge systems and cultural subjectivities through the language of manifestos.

Manifestos of this era are also known to catalyze collective movements. For instance, the Design for the Pluriverse approach (Escobar, 2018) champions multiple ways of being in opposition to colonial epistemologies, with manifestos becoming tools for articulating this multiplicity. Within this framework, manifestos emphasize cultural pluralism over hegemonic dominance; they not only produce counter-hegemonic discourses but also foster the emergence of new epistemological frameworks.

### **3. Theoretical Framework of Critical Discourse Analysis**

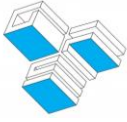
The necessity of addressing graphic design manifestos not solely through their aesthetic or textual content but also within their social, cultural, and ideological contexts is frequently emphasized by contemporary critical approaches. Accordingly, the theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA considers discourse as more than a linguistic structure; it is a practice that reproduces social power relations (Fairclough, 1995). This approach offers an effective method for analyzing design manifestos, which are marked by their normative and directive characteristics.

#### **3.1 Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Discourse Model**

Developed by Norman Fairclough, the CDA model conceptualizes discourse as a multilayered practice where social power relations are reproduced and transformed (Fairclough, 1995; 2001). This model, by analyzing texts on three levels, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the ideological operations of graphic design manifestos.

First, on the textual level, linguistic elements of the text—such as word choice, syntax, metaphor, modality, and typographic features—are closely examined. High-modality expressions like “we must” or “we are responsible,” frequently observed in manifestos, are strong indicators of normative discourse. Metaphors such as “design is a struggle” or “we are building a new world” serve not only aesthetic but also ideological functions (Helfand, 2001; Miller, 1984). As suggested by Machin and Mayr (2012), the relationship between linguistic analysis and visual layout is also evaluated to reveal how rhetoric is formally supported through typography, color, and composition.

The second dimension, discourse practice, examines the production, distribution, and consumption processes of the text. This includes where the manifesto is published—whether in academic journals, design platforms, or social media—the target audience, and interdiscursivity. For example, the distribution of First Things First through printed magazines intervened within the discipline, whereas activist publications such as Adbusters offered an effective platform to achieve broader public impact (Fairclough, 2001; van Dijk, 2006).



At the level of social practice, the analysis turns to the historical, economic, and ideological structures that shape the text. Here, the text functions as an ideological state apparatus; it may be part of the education system, media structure, or cultural hegemony (Althusser, 1971). For instance, the Bauhaus manifesto normalizes rationality and functionality as aspects of modernist ideology, while First Things First seeks to construct an alternative value system in response to the neoliberal advertising discourse of the 1960s (Triggs, 2006; van Dijk, 2006).

This tripartite structure allows for a dialectical analysis that moves from the micro to the macro level. Linguistic choices in the text are linked to production and consumption processes of discourse practices, which are in turn shaped by socio-cultural structures and their ideological codes. In normative and activist texts like design manifestos, this approach systematically reveals which forms of knowledge are legitimized, what subject positions are proposed, and which social transformations are targeted (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 2006).

In this regard, Fairclough's three-dimensional model offers a robust methodological foundation for researchers conducting ideological analyses of graphic design manifestos. The simultaneous evaluation of language use, publication processes, and historicity provides a comprehensive understanding of how manifestos function not only as aesthetic texts but as cultural and political instruments.

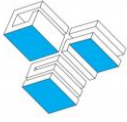
### **3.2 Ideology and Discourse: Contributions of Althusser and van Dijk**

Graphic design manifestos produce discursive environments that reconstruct the subject beyond mere aesthetic preferences on an ideological level. In this respect, the theories of Althusser and van Dijk constitute foundational pillars in the analysis of manifestos. While Althusser (1971) explains the social subjectification of individuals through ideological apparatuses, van Dijk (2006) focuses on the mechanisms of ideological production within discourse. Thus, the central analytical question becomes: how do manifesto texts position subjects, and which ideological norms do they serve?

Althusser's concept of "ideological state apparatuses" enables a rereading of graphic design manifestos as ideological texts intersecting with social class, cultural structures, and state institutions. According to Althusser, institutions like schools, family, and media interpellate individuals into specific subject positions, and individuals become part of dominant ideology by responding to such calls. Manifestos can be seen as texts that "hail" the designer into an ideological responsibility beyond creative activity (Althusser, 1971). For example, in First Things First, verbal structures like "we must" and "we are responsible" function not only as ethical imperatives but also as forms of ideological interpellation (Helfand, 2001; Garland, 1964). Thus, the designer is transformed into a subject embedded in ideological structures as defined by Althusser.

Teun van Dijk, on the other hand, focuses on how discourse reproduces ideology and articulates the logical connections between text, discourse practice, and social practice. Rhetorical strategies,





metaphor use, nominalization, and grammatical passivity—all linguistic choices—are seen as techniques that naturalize specific ideological orientations within manifestos (van Dijk, 2006). For example, in *An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth*, the term “growth” functions as a metaphor pointing to a collective project without referencing specific intentions. This linguistic transformation renders the ideological position invisible, thereby reinforcing the persuasive power of the discourse (Triggs, 2006).

Both theorists offer different yet complementary perspectives on discourse and ideology: Althusser focuses on ideological mechanisms that interpellate the subject, while van Dijk emphasizes the ideological guidance embedded in linguistic structures. Manifestos are texts that can be analyzed through both lenses. For instance, *Decolonising Design* calls the designer into a “postcolonial subject” position through anti-colonial discourse, resonating with Althusser’s concept of interpellation (Ansari et al., 2019). Within van Dijk’s framework, the use of local dialects, motifs, and anti-colonial sequences in this manifesto can be analyzed as ideological normalization and counter-discourse strategies.

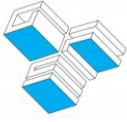
This approach enables a critical reading of manifestos that simultaneously reveals both the construction of individual subjectivity and the naturalization of ideological formations in society. Idiomatic expressions, metaphorical appeals, and typographic emphases in the text demonstrate how visual tools also support this ideological process.

Building on these theoretical foundations, this study systematically reveals the ideological norms that graphic design manifestos support on both content and formal levels. The theories of Althusser and van Dijk offer a strong analytical framework for the manifesto analyses presented in the following sections.

### **3.3. Foucault and Discourse: Knowledge, Power, and Normalization**

Michel Foucault’s discourse theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding graphic design manifestos. Foucault defines discourse as more than a structure that conveys information; it is a mechanism that constructs epistemic power, shapes norms, and determines subjectivity (Foucault, 1972). In this regard, graphic design manifestos emerge not simply as aesthetic declarations, but as ideological discourses that reveal which forms of knowledge are legitimized, which are excluded, and how the designer is constructed within a normative framework.

According to Foucault, discursive practices not only determine what is considered “true” within a society but also establish the foundations of its production relations (Foucault, 1980). For instance, modernist manifestos (e.g., Bauhaus) repeatedly emphasize functionality and rationality; this discourse positions the designer as a technical expert serving the object. This positioning becomes part of the design knowledge system and activates a mechanism of power that compels the individual to self-discipline, as described in Foucault’s theory of “disciplinary society” (Foucault,



1977). Similarly, although postmodern manifestos highlight individual creativity and self-expression, they also reproduce a knowledge regime of their own (Poynor, 2003).

Foucault's concept of "normalization" plays a critical role in understanding the ideological effects of manifestos. Normalization refers to the process by which certain behaviors are accepted and others are marginalized (Foucault, 1977). This dynamic is also evident in the realm of design manifestos: in *First Things First*, the call for ethical responsibility defines the designer as a "post-consumerist" subject through a process of normalization (Garland, 1964; Triggs, 2006). This call functions as a discursive mechanism that constructs a new norm and compels the individual to conform to it.

Foucault's knowledge/power duality enables us to examine who is speaking in manifestos and what knowledge is being legitimized. For example, anti-Western discourse in *Decolonising Design* challenges hegemonic knowledge regimes by promoting epistemic diversity. However, this challenge simultaneously generates a new form of power within its own discursive perception (Escobar, 2018; Ansari et al., 2019). This aligns with Foucault's emphasis on the diffusion of power at the micro level and its internalization within the minds of individuals.

Thus, Foucault's theory allows us to go beyond the literal content of manifesto texts and instead understand the knowledge regimes from which they originate, the normative structures on which they rely, and the ways they position the subject. This entails not only reading manifestos as ideological objects but also analyzing the epistemic order in which they are produced. In this way, the manifesto emerges as an apparatus that both produces knowledge and calls the individual into that knowledge system within Foucault's discourse/power/subject triangle.

#### 4. Method

The primary method employed in this study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), developed by Norman Fairclough (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006). CDA is an interdisciplinary approach that enables the revelation of the social and ideological dimensions of discourse. By addressing both the structural features and the social, institutional, and epistemic contexts of discourse, this method unveils the linguistic and societal functions of manifestos. CDA has been particularly applied in architectural research to uncover the ideological content embedded in manifestos (Topaloğlu & Beşgen, 2023).

Within the framework of CDA, the following steps were applied in the analysis of five selected manifestos:

Description: Linguistic elements such as word choice, grammar, metaphor, modality, and typographic strategies were systematically examined. Word frequency analyses and high-modality verb usages (e.g., "must," "should," "ought to") were scrutinized to reveal ideological emphases. The structural organization of the texts—including headings, subheadings, slogans, and visual-emphasis layout—was also conceptualized (Fairclough, 1995; Machin & Mayr, 2012).



**Interpretation:** This stage focused on the semantic meanings related to the production and consumption of the texts. The platforms on which the manifestos were published (magazines, blogs, social media), author profiles, publication styles, and levels of interdiscursivity were examined. In this context, the methodological practices in Topaloğlu & Beşgen's (2023) analysis of the Venice Biennale manifesto serve as a model, as their study analyzed the manifesto through ideological discourse, interpretation, and discursive coherence.

**Explanation:** At this stage, the social, ideological, and historical contexts that shape each manifesto were explored. Correlations were established between prominent themes in the texts and contemporary social crises (e.g., climate crisis, postcolonial struggles, critiques of neoliberalism). Additionally, linguistic features such as passive constructions and nominalization were analyzed as contributors to the naturalization of ideological norms and subject positions (van Dijk, 2006; Foucault, 1977).

#### 4.1 Sample Selection

Five graphic design manifestos were selected based on criteria of historical diversity, ideological depth, and geographical representation:

- *First Things First (1964 and 2000)* - social responsibility and critique of media culture
- *An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth (1998)* - emphasis on postmodern individuality and process
- *Decolonising Design Manifesto (2019)* - postcolonial approach and epistemic diversity
- *Karlskrona Manifesto for Sustainability Design (2014)* - sustainability and eco-social politics

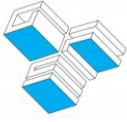
The selection of these manifestos was strategic in that they reflect discursive transformations within the design discipline, shifts in thematic focus from aesthetics to activism, and varying degrees of engagement with social issues.

#### 4.2 Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process was structured according to CDA stages described in works by Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (2006), and Topaloğlu & Beşgen (2023). Each manifesto was individually analyzed, followed by a comparative review focusing on ideological coherence and divergence. The manifestos included in the study were examined according to the stages outlined in Table 1.

| Stage          | Dimension of Analysis                         | Method of Analysis                                   | Tool                             |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Description    | Linguistic structure and typographic features | Textual analysis                                     | NVivo                            |
| Interpretation | Discursive practice and interdiscursivity     | Analysis of publication channels                     | Content analysis and comparisons |
| Explanation    | Social context and ideological criteria       | Thematic analysis, historical contextual examination | Literature review                |

**Table 1.** Stages of Analysis



## 5. Findings

In this section, five manifestos—First Things First (1964-2000), An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth (1998), Decolonising Design Manifesto (2019), and Karlskrona Manifesto for Sustainability Design (2014)—are analyzed through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to reveal common themes, discursive strategies, and ideological positions. First, the historical and institutional contexts of each text are identified; then, linguistic elements at the textual level such as word choice, modality, and metaphor are examined; finally, the manifestos are evaluated through the dimensions of discursive practice and social context.

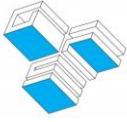
### 5.1. Discourse Analysis of the First Things First Manifestos: A Critical Comparison of the 1964 and 2000 Versions

The “First Things First” manifesto, published by Ken Garland in 1964, and its updated version republished by Adbusters in 2000, strongly emphasize that graphic design is a discursive field grounded in social responsibility. Both texts center the concepts of ethics, public good, and cultural awareness, redefining the designer’s subjectivity and reproducing it within an ideological framework (Garland, 1964; Barnbrook, 2000; Bierut, 2012).

When analyzed through Fairclough’s (1995) discourse analysis framework, the use of modality and pronoun choices in the manifestos reveal their ideological force. Both versions frequently use high-modality verbs (“we must,” “we propose”) and the collective pronoun “we,” inviting readers into a shared realm of ethical responsibility. The normative discourse generated through these modalities can be associated with Althusser’s (1971) concept of “interpellation,” where the designer is reconstructed not as an apparatus of the ideological system, but as a subject critically positioned within it.

Van Dijk’s (2006) theory of ideological discourse unveils the “us versus them” binary embedded in the manifestos. The “us” that represents ethical design and the “them” aligned with consumerist culture allow the reader to position themselves on the “right side.” Although this binary does not aim to dismantle hegemonic power, it offers a counter-hegemonic ideological potential. These manifestos contribute to the reconstruction of a non-normative yet directive knowledge system within the field of design. Evaluated through the lens of Foucault’s (1977; 1980) theory of power, the manifestos propose a domain of resistance that lies outside the power structures shaping graphic designers as subjects. Given the decentralized nature of power that circulates among individuals through everyday practices, the manifestos offer an alternative model of subjectivation at the micro-power level. Notably, the phrase “we have reached a saturation point of visual communication” signifies a critical stance structured against the neoliberal order of visual communication.

In the context of Miller’s (1984) rhetorical analysis, it is evident that both manifestos systematically employ the ethos-pathos-logos triad. The identities of the signatories serve as carriers of ethos, while strong consumer-related imagery reinforces the pathos effect. Expressions



like “high-pitched scream of consumer selling” embody an emotional resistance, whereas statements such as “there are more worthy things to apply our skills to” provide a rational basis in the logos dimension.

From the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis, the typographic layout and visual structure of the 1964 and 2000 versions should also be examined. As Machin and Mayr (2012) note, typographic choices are more than aesthetic; they function as discursive strategies. The use of sans-serif fonts, block text layout, and visual simplicity in the 2000 version reinforce the seriousness and ideological orientation of the text.

When analyzed at the level of social practice, the context and circulation of the manifestos demonstrate their broader impact. The 1964 version gained public visibility through readings on BBC and publication in *The Guardian*, transforming it into a public rather than merely intra-disciplinary reference (Soar, 2002). The 2000 version, by contrast, achieved a wider global circulation through publications such as *Adbusters*, *Emigre*, and *Eye*, thereby acquiring an interdisciplinary discursive power.

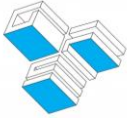
In both texts, the subjectivity of the designer is reconstructed as that of an intellectual endowed with ethical responsibility and political consciousness. This reconstruction prioritizes design as a domain of ideological struggle. As Bierut (2012) notes, these manifestos redefine the designer’s role by forging a strong connection between ethical action and aesthetic production.

In general terms, the First Things First manifestos are theoretically dense and politically directive texts that intersect discourse, ideology, and subjectivity within the realm of graphic design. Fairclough’s discourse analysis, Althusser’s interpellation, van Dijk’s ideological dichotomies, and Foucault’s micro-power framework collectively offer complementary lenses for a deeper analysis of these texts. Both manifestos should be read as discursive interventions that expand the ideological boundaries of graphic design.

## **5.2. Discourse Analysis of An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth**

Bruce Mau’s 1998 work *An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth* transcends the boundaries of a mere professional directive in graphic design and instead transforms into an ideological formation tool at the discursive level. The “incompleteness” of the manifesto is indicative of the logic of postmodern discourse. When examined through Lyotard’s postmodern epistemology, which prioritizes fragmented, plural, and localized narratives of knowledge, Mau’s manifesto presents a structure that aligns with such multiplicity (Lyotard, 1984). This pluralistic structure positions the reader not as a passive recipient, but as an active co-producer and co-completer of the discourse.

The statements in the manifesto are composed as short, imperative sentences: “Stay up late,” “Capture accidents,” “Process is more important than outcome.” These, as emphasized by Fairclough’s (1995) discourse analysis model, construct a normative ideological framework by calling the subject to a specific mode of action. In this context, Althusser’s concept of



“interpellation” gains importance. According to Althusser, ideology hails individuals as subjects; this process of hailing enables individuals to recognize themselves in specific ideological positions (Althusser, 1971). Mau’s use of the imperative mood is a linguistic manifestation of this process. The reader perceives these calls to action as more than suggestions; they are norms to be internalized for constructing their ethical and professional identity.

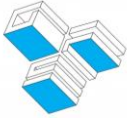
Van Dijk’s (2006) theory of ideology enables a deeper analysis of this discursive construction. Ideology, he argues, operates indirectly and implicitly through discourse; repeated words and metaphors present a worldview as natural, universal, and inevitable. In Mau’s manifesto, the constant repetition of the concept of “growth” transforms it into a field of ideological subjectivation. “Growth” ceases to be a neutral concept; instead, it carries ideological weight, such as neoliberal individualism, the imperative of self-reinvention, and the glorification of personal responsibility.

From Foucault’s perspective on power-knowledge relations, Mau’s text serves as a productive example for studying micro-techniques of power. As Foucault (1977) suggests, modern power is profoundly productive—it shapes individuals’ behaviors, desires, and identities. In this context, Mau’s statements such as “Let yourself be changed” or “Be careful to take risks” encourage self-regulation and self-discipline. Power functions not from a central institution, but through the individual themselves; the individual becomes an ideological subject (Foucault, 1977). Mau’s propositions shape the designer as a continually transforming, critically thinking, and self-disciplining actor.

Mau’s manifesto can also be read as an extension of ideological state apparatuses. In Althusser’s (1971) conceptualization, institutions such as schools, media, and cultural texts transmit ideologies and subjectify individuals. Although the manifesto appears as a personal guide, it functions as a normative document encoding a specific regime of ethical, aesthetic, and professional behavior. The freedom presented to the designer is, in this regard, circumscribed by self-control and ethical responsibility. Phipps’ (2012) conceptualization of “ideological intervention in ethical design” is critical for assessing the manifesto’s impact.

In terms of multimodal discourse analysis, as Machin and Mayr (2012) emphasize, the typographic layout, use of white space, and page design also contribute to the discursive production. Mau’s text, with its unordered, visually striking, and scattered structure, directs the reader through the flow of the content while simultaneously offering interpretative freedom. Though this may appear to emphasize a democratic and open-ended discourse, it in fact aims at reshaping the individual within a normative ideological framework.

From a socio-historical perspective, the era in which the manifesto was written is also significant. The 1990s marked an era of accelerated digitalization in design, the spread of neoliberal individualism, and the transformation of creative industries into ideological production centers. Mau’s manifesto can be seen as a response to this transformation. The manifesto implies that the



designer should be a subject carrying ethical, social, and epistemological responsibility. However, this discourse of responsibility often functions as a mechanism reinforcing the individual's conformity within the system.

When examined within the framework of discourse theory, *An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth* is more than a professional text; it is an ideological apparatus that shapes the individual's identity, ethical perspective, and social position. While the "incomplete" structure may outwardly suggest a discourse of freedom, the analysis reveals a multi-layered ideological operation involving the hailing of the subject, the imposition of certain norms, and the activation of internalized disciplinary mechanisms. In this regard, Mau's text produces a powerful ideological discourse contributing to the construction of modern designer subjectivity, situated at the intersection of Foucault, Althusser, and van Dijk's theoretical perspectives.

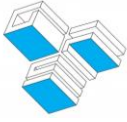
### 5.3. Discourse Analysis of the Decolonising Design Manifesto

The Decolonising Design Manifesto stands out as a radical discursive text that critiques Western-centric design paradigms and calls for a reassessment of design's role in the postcolonial context. The manifesto aims to expose epistemological inequalities within the discipline of design and seeks to recognize knowledge production modes that extend beyond Western norms (Escobar, 2018). At the level of discourse, the text constitutes both an ideological and political intervention.

According to Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis, at the textual level, the manifesto employs language that expresses collective subjectivity. Phrases such as "We believe," "we challenge," and "we reject" foreground the construction of a collective identity (Fairclough, 1995). This collectivism also aligns with Althusser's concept of "interpellation," positioning the reader not simply as a designer but as a postcolonial critical subject (Althusser, 1971). The purpose of this hailing is to foster subjects who challenge and transform Western design norms rather than passively conform to them.

Van Dijk's (2006) framework of ideological discourse analysis further reveals the binary structure underlying the manifesto. The "we" group represents pluralistic and self-determined designers striving for postcolonial justice, while the "they" group refers to Western academic institutions, design curricula, and the global design industry. This dichotomy produces a counter-hegemonic discourse that challenges existing power structures (Santos, 2014).

In the context of Foucault's theory of knowledge and power, the manifesto interrogates who produces design knowledge and how. Through the concept of "epistemic violence," the text emphasizes how Western design ideologies marginalize the knowledge production of the Global South (Spivak, 1988). The manifesto thereby mobilizes Foucault's resistance mechanisms, contesting the normalization of design epistemologies shaped by dominant Western frameworks. In the postcolonial context, it is well recognized that knowledge functions as a practice of power (Foucault, 1980).



The manifesto's vocabulary reinforces its ideological depth. Terms such as "coloniality," "epistemic oppression," "hegemony," and "othering" expose the structural inequalities within the design discourse. According to Machin and Mayr (2012), the presence of such ideologically charged terms signals a direct intervention into power relations.

At the level of social practice, the manifesto has reverberated through global design conferences, academic publications, and collaborative production platforms. For example, the Design Anthropology Futures symposium held in 2018 and numerous articles in the Design and Culture journal have concretized the epistemological impact of this manifesto (Gunn, Otto & Smith, 2013; Clarke, 2017). In this sense, the manifesto may be seen as a discursive vehicle of a broader social movement.

The manifesto's multimodal aspects avoid simplified typographic forms or graphic symbols. Instead, it prioritizes textual density to emphasize intellectual engagement, representing an aesthetic stance that favors critical reflection over visual embellishment. This approach may also be interpreted as a deliberate opposition to Western design aesthetics.

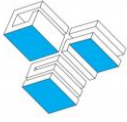
The Decolonising Design Manifesto offers a critical and theoretical intervention against epistemological homogenization in design. While positioning subjects through Althusser's concept of interpellation, it adopts van Dijk's analysis of ideological polarization and employs Foucault's power-knowledge framework to reveal design as a political and ideological tool. In this way, the manifesto establishes a discursive foundation for a postcolonial paradigm shift within the field of design.

#### **5.4 Discourse Analysis of The Karlskrona Manifesto for Sustainability Design**

Developed in 2014, The Karlskrona Manifesto for Sustainability Design signals the need for a multilayered transformation in the fields of information technologies and software engineering by addressing the societal, economic, and individual dimensions of sustainability. The manifesto can be interpreted as a text that questions the long-term impacts of design actions, promotes systemic thinking, and redefines the designer's responsibility within a transdisciplinary context. Accordingly, theoretical tools that uncover the relations between ideology, power, and discourse prove instrumental in analyzing this manifesto.

Within the framework of Norman Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of discourse analysis, the manifesto is constructed as: (1) a textual-level deployment of linguistic strategies geared toward sustainability, (2) a form of discursive practice aimed at professionals in the field of technology, and (3) a social practice that attempts to establish a new behavioral norm in response to the ecological and ethical dilemmas of the digital age. Recurrent expressions such as "we must" and "we cannot ignore" reinforce the normative stance of the discourse, positioning the designer as an ethical agent. This usage aligns with Althusser's (1971) concept of interpellation, in which the manifesto hails technology experts as "subjects of sustainability."





In light of Teun van Dijk's (2006) theory of ideological discourse, the manifesto delineates a sharp binary between "us" and "them"—those committed to sustainability and those who resist it. The statement "sustainability is not optional" challenges the dominant production logic of the technology sector and constructs a counter-hegemonic discourse. This structure makes the ideological nature of the text explicit, as it advocates not for the reproduction but for the transformation of the system.

From the perspective of Michel Foucault's theory of power/knowledge, the manifesto reveals the potential of knowledge to produce power. It particularly emphasizes the role of software engineering as a knowledge regime capable of shaping society. While critically interrogating this regime, the manifesto proposes an alternative normative space. The phrase "design is never neutral" makes these power relations explicit, affirming that design always gains meaning within a specific value system.

In terms of multimodal discourse analysis, the typographic structure of the Karlskrona Manifesto is designed in a clear and functional layout. This design reinforces the seriousness and professionalism of its content. As noted by Machin and Mayr (2012), visual elements such as font choices, paragraph structure, and heading use significantly affect the credibility and persuasive power of a discourse.

The context in which the discourse was produced is also noteworthy. The manifesto was collaboratively created during the Karlskrona Manifesto Workshops, bringing together software developers, systems analysts, and user experience experts (Becker et al., 2015). This collective formation underscores the manifesto as more than an individual call to action; it is a shared and community-driven one.

Based on this analysis, The Karlskrona Manifesto for Sustainability Design frames sustainability as both an ideological and ethical issue. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) standpoint, the manifesto presents a multidimensional ideological structure composed of textual, visual, and social layers. Fairclough's model identifies the structural dimensions; Althusser's interpellation theory highlights mechanisms of subjectification; van Dijk's theory reveals ideological polarizations; and Foucault's framework demonstrates how discourse is shaped by power/knowledge relations. Collectively, these perspectives emphasize that design is not neutral but is inherently a political act.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

Graphic design manifestos are discursive texts in which ideological positions, social critiques, and political stances crystallize. This study, grounded in a discourse analysis perspective, has demonstrated that First Things First (1964), First Things First 2000, An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth, Decolonising Design Manifesto, and The Karlskrona Manifesto for Sustainability Design constitute a form of social and cultural intervention.

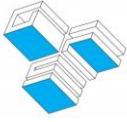
Although the five manifestos analyzed throughout the study were produced in different temporal, cultural, and ideological contexts, they exhibit certain patterns in terms of how the designer subject is positioned, which ideological structures are being critiqued, and what kinds of discursive strategies are employed. The comparative table presented below reveals these patterns across discursive, ideological, and epistemological dimensions and provides a theoretical foundation for the interpretive section of this study (Table 2).

| Manifesto                                 | Designer Subjectivity                                       | Ideological Positioning                      | Discursive Strategy                                 | Addressed Themes                                            |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>First Things First (1964)</b>          | Ethical informant, socially responsible designer            | Against consumer culture                     | Collective discourse, public call                   | Critique of consumerism, public design                      |
| <b>First Things First 2000</b>            | Critical subject with high ethical responsibility           | Against the neoliberal system                | Re-interpellation, discourse of unity               | Criticism of commercial design, social design               |
| <b>An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth</b> | Creative, interdisciplinary, self-aware subject             | Focused on creativity and personal growth    | Fragmented suggestions, individual address          | Creativity, process-orientation, personal development       |
| <b>Decolonising Design Manifesto</b>      | Indigenous/marginalized subject with postcolonial awareness | Against Western-centric knowledge production | Counter-discourse, binary division of 'us vs. them' | Colonialism, cultural representation, epistemic justice     |
| <b>Karlskrona Manifesto</b>               | Systems thinker, sustainability agent                       | Against the sustainability crisis            | Strategic propositions, systemic-level discourse    | Sustainability, ethical technology, societal transformation |

*Table 2. Comparative Table of the Manifestos*

Although the manifestos analyzed in this study were produced in different historical contexts and in response to different societal issues, they share a common ideological ground: redefining design as more than a tool that serves market demands, framing it instead as an ethical, critical, and transformative act. In this context, Louis Althusser's (1971) theory of ideology and interpellation offers a significant conceptual framework for understanding how the designer is subjectified within these manifestos. The texts do not address the designer as a passive element of the system but rather call them to act as its critic and transformer. Particularly, First Things First 2000 emphasizes the designer's ethical responsibility through the construction of a collective subject via the pronoun "we." This collectivity opens an alternative domain of subjectivity in opposition to the operations of ideological apparatuses.

Michel Foucault's conceptual framework on power-knowledge relations and the production of subjectivity proves especially illuminating for understanding subject formation in texts such as An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth and the Karlskrona Manifesto. According to Foucault (1980), power is more than repressive; it is also productive, shaping and reconstructing the subject under



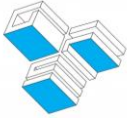
its influence. Bruce Mau's manifesto positions the designer as a creative, systemic thinker endowed with ecological and social awareness. When assessed through Foucault's notion of "normalization," this figure becomes a new form of normative subjectivity.

Teun A. van Dijk's (1998) model of ideological discourse analysis functions effectively in decoding the binary oppositions of "us" and "them" present in the manifestos. In particular, the Decolonising Design Manifesto constructs a discursive opposition by defending indigenous and marginalized knowledge systems against Western-centric design epistemologies. This opposition also plays a role in the ideological construction of the social order. The manifesto reconfigures design not only as an aesthetic but also as an epistemic and political domain, thereby contributing to the discursive struggle of the postcolonial period.

Evaluated within the framework of Norman Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of discourse analysis — text, discursive practice, and social practice — each manifesto produces counter-hegemonic discourses across all three levels. The linguistic choices at the textual level (e.g., modality, metaphors, pronouns), the channels through which the manifestos circulate at the discursive practice level (e.g., The Guardian, Adbusters, conference proceedings), and their engagement with historical context at the level of social practice have been analyzed. While the First Things First manifestos critique consumer culture, Decolonising Design renders colonized subjectivities visible, and the Karlskrona Manifesto offers a systemic response to sustainability crises.

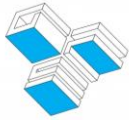
A common trait of graphic design manifestos is their treatment of design as a practice that generates norms, constructs discourse, and holds the potential to transform social structures. In these texts, the designer is constructed not merely as a producer but as a narrator, a questioner, and a transformer. For this reason, manifestos may be regarded as calls to social action. They redefine what is acceptable in the design field, which types of knowledge are considered valuable, and who has the right to speak.

This study aimed to make the ideological nature of design visible through a critical discourse analysis of graphic design manifestos. The analyses conducted within the frameworks of Althusser's theory of ideology, Foucault's approach to power and subjectivity, van Dijk's discourse-ideology model, and Fairclough's discourse analysis model demonstrate that design manifestos should be regarded as more than aesthetic texts; they are also political, ethical, and epistemological interventions. Within this context, graphic design is more than a formal activity; it is a vehicle for knowledge production, subject formation, and social transformation. Therefore, manifestos should be read as texts that challenge, reshape, and redefine the disciplinary boundaries of graphic design.



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