

# ADAM

An experiment in mapping  
collaborative design in the Arab world  
*By Pink Tank and Fikra*

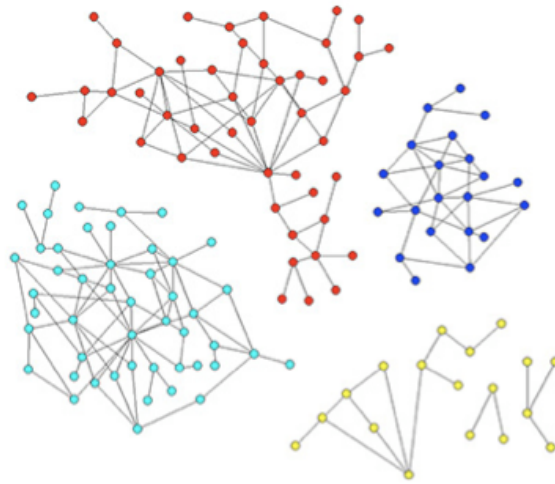
Collaboration is an increasingly vital feature of a highly networked world. In order to innovate quickly in more complex environments, companies and individuals no longer rely exclusively on their own resources to generate new ideas. In today's hyper-connected world, innovation implies collaboration.

What is true in business is true in design — a lack of collaboration limits the ability of a designer to adapt, grow and tap into complex challenges. Technology has reduced barriers to entry and it is easier for designers to branch out and connect. Designers no longer operate in isolation - they partner up to create more effective solutions and products, sometimes outside their own geographic catchment areas.

Collaborative design means involving different people in the design process with the aim of creating better projects or products. The more connected a designer is, the more he/she can tap in richer networks to test and materialize ideas.

## **CONCEPTS AND FIRST QUESTIONS FOR ADAM**

Maps are good for visualizing relationships. They are also a useful tool to show complexity and change. Collaboration maps reveal the formal networks of an individual or an organization, showing relationships between two or more nodes and the value of these relationships. In the business world, collaboration and network maps allow executives to quantify the costs and benefits of their networks. Will the same be true for designers?



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ADAM is a visual and online tool to understand the system of collaboration in design in the Arab world. It is an investigation of the networks of collaboration between designers, identifying the relationships that enable them to ask questions, prototype and become more effective. Our ultimate objective is to extract narratives from the map about designers and the ways in which they collaborate in the Arab world.

These are some of the questions we will be asking:

- Who's out there?
- Who is connected to who? Who are designers talking to?
- Who do designers ask for advice before making an important decision? With whom are they most likely to discuss a new idea? Who are they working with? How are they collaborating?
- Who are the biggest connectors?
- What are the most active networks of collaboration? Where are they located?
- How is the Arab design community/ecosystem structured?
- What is the monetary value of the links between designers? How much time and/or money is saved by working with other designers?

## **ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY**

In the context of ADAM, collaboration implies any type of collaboration - commercial or non-commercial - across countries, industries or organizations, leading to a design idea, object or project. Collaboration implies all kinds of interactions, regardless of their frequency.

In a first phase, ADAM will acquire data through surveys and interviews. We will identify a first set of designers and map and analyze their connections. ADAM should provide an understanding of how collaboration gets done and will document the individual networks of every designer included in this first set. This first phase will help to identify some initial "central connectors" and some organizations and/or designers that are not necessarily always recognized as central in their design field or in their country.

In a second phase, ADAM will look at the benefits generated by collaborating as well as the possible costs and opportunities associated to increasing connectivity among designers. ADAM will attempt to quantify the costs and benefits per collaborative project. ADAM will start producing "ideal networks of collaboration" for designers by mapping the shortest, most efficient paths for collaboration - those with the smallest number of jumps between two designers, those with the highest number of connectors etc... ADAM will also attempt to determine whether the "impact/reach" of a designer or a group of designers is determined by the number of people in the network or rather by the type of designers, the quality of relationships in a network and/or the number of connectors involved.

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## **CRITERIA**

- “Collaboration” includes any type of relationship between a designer and other designers or organizations as defined by each designer
- ADAM includes designers, artisans, craftsmen, experts and organizations linked to design working in or located in the Arab world who have collaborated on a project
- “Design” is defined broadly and includes all disciplines - graphic design, fashion, interior design, product design, architecture, social, interactive and media design...
- ADAM is about the now and looks forward: it maps out relationships that exist today. It is constantly updated with new collaborations
- The type of collaborations is defined either as “commercial” or “non-commercial”. ADAM will attempt to define the social connections between designers as well.
- Networks are mapped out with the help of surveys, in-depth interviews and independent research

On the occasion of Design Days Dubai, the methodology of ADAM will be presented and put to the test through a representation of a first sample of a collaborative map.