WHY IDEOLOGY NEEDS DESIGN

by

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Preface

My interest in design developed out of my interest in fine arts. During my study at the Rietveld academy I had the opportunity to choose for a course within the academy that is design focussed. Design interests me because I believe it is a way to rethink the how people make use of their surroundings and the objects that are in it. What may have been a reason for me to have a stronger interest in fine arts at first, was my misconception of design to be about creating functional things, not realising that the term functionality is very flexible. Function can be anything, from a chair to sit on until a decoration that pleases a kind of aesthetic value, or the function of encouraging people to reflect on their behaviour, showing criticism etc. Design can be a way to communicate ideas and may function as a critical method that tries to connect to the needs and desires of people or oneself. Design can perhaps be more powerful than art in the context of our consumerist society.

The main part of this thesis consists out of a philosophical inquiry into the effects of social ideology, and more specifically what the function of design is in this system. When design is used as a tool to make a connection between people and technology, it can increase the effectiveness of both, but at the same time understanding of the underlying principles essential to the functioning of technology seems to decrease, or at least be understood in a limited way and by specialists only.

The task of much design is considered to be that the connection of people to their ever increasing technical extensions is smooth, because it appears to be inevitable that the use of technology will increase. It can be said that it is a necessary evolutionary step for human beings to be able to use advanced extensions of their intrinsic capabilities properly. Therefore, I will start to analyse the definition of the term design, what it means to me and what fascinates me about it. I've noticed that designs are often made using suppositions and even presuppositions, which is inevitable especially in designs that attempt to solve so called 'wicked problems'. Wouldn't it be more interesting to create design that is more open to interpretation and takes into account opportunistic behaviour, with fewer determinations and more flexibility considered in the initial design?

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1 . INTRODUCTION

Due to its original abstract definition and wide applicability the word design is easily misinterpreted. Since I will use this term repeatedly, and recognising the problem of linguistics, I think it is important to make a short definition first. Take for instance this confusing sentence:

"Design is to design the design of the design"

Source: http://www.michael-hardt.com/PDF/lectures/design-definition.pdf (visited November, 2013)

Of course nothing is really said in that sentence, because there is no context. The first time design is used as an abstract definition, the second as a verb, the third as a noun, the fourth is the result of the third and second. To be designing a design is like saying; To be shaping a shape, or to be planning a plan. This is still understandable. It is the last part that I find confusing, why it would still be a design after completion and still be named design? It would be a lot clearer if there were to be a different term. It seems like if something is spoke about as being design even after the stage of designing has clearly passed, it means that there is great recognition and therefore continuous emphasis on the way that it came about and the ideology in which it was created.

I think there cannot be enough of that type of recognition, if things are valued and understood in the same way as in which they have been created we would have a lot less waste. The more clear the function the more successful the design. This is what I like about design. Some keywords

of my motivation to be concerned with design would be: innovation, change, technicalities, making, problem solving, fixing, materials and cultural aspects.

I will look into the relationship between a design and a shared ideology of people which makes that designs successful. To be designing is often meant as shaping something according to taste, and the likes or needs of the person or the group involved. It can also mean to reorganise systems or to construct objects. The following quote of Herbert Simon (1988) defining design I found a good starting point for this thesis:

"Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones"

This sounds quite logical and correct to me, yet it is on the other hand an ill definition. Basically it states that; design equals positive change. But aren't there so many other professions in which people aim for the same thing? Isn't it part of human virtue to try to change their existing situation into a preferred one? What does it then mean to be designing? Does this mean a designer should be a specialised critic, looking for all dissatisfactory parts in his surroundings. Starting from the standpoint that the existing situation always demands change? Of course change in itself is a complex term, things often change in one way only in order to stay the same in another, and the inference may be said. Also the meaning of a preferred situation is not a clear definition because it is basically like saying it should be good or virtues. From accepting it as a clear definition to realising it is in fact a very ill definition,

made it seem to be an even more eligible starting point. What is perhaps a little closer to a proper definition is this quote by Charles Eames:

"Eventually everything connects - people, ideas, objects. The quality of the connections is the key to quality per se."

Source: http://www.eamesfoundation.org/ (visited November, 2013)

What should not be overlooked is that the ill definition of what it means to design is only becoming vaguer as design becomes attached to any creative process. Lucas Verweij mentions in this respect:

''No longer is its scope confined to interior, graphic or product design. Now it also encompasses social, interaction and food design. Then we have design thinking and service design, the end products of which can be a service, a mentality or a procedure. That widens the scope of design further to include process, distribution, retail and organization. Nothing remains untouched."

Source: http://www.dezeen.com/2013/12/26/opinion-lucas-verweij-design-bubble/ (visited January, 2014)

It seems to be very accepted to attach all these other terms to design, this perhaps creates an even greater need to remember about what is really understood by the term design. What is it that these fields have in common that makes them all design?

Aiming to broaden my ideas about what design could be, I focussed not on the assumptions of what design is supposed to be or how it appears to be known, but rather philosophical thinkers, theories and writings from different backgrounds became part of my research whilst writing this thesis. The insights that can be gained through these writings brought me closer to the essence of what it means to be designing. What are the true motivations

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behind the behaviour of people? For example the way that The Republic by Plato examines the basic structure of society and what it means to be just or to have justice. This text was useful for me as a graduating student because it is a reminder of what it means to find a place in society. Also Spinoza brought some valuable insight about the abstract definitions of the finite and infinite, which led me to the question of; Why do people want things they don't have, and what creates the believe to need something? Inspired by Buckminster Fuller's Operating manual to spaceship earth, I see the current sustainability movement and fears of people about the environment clearly linked to the abstract notion of the finite resources of our planet. At the same time I read Karl Marx and am influenced by popular Slovenian philosopher and sociologist Slavoj Žižek. This opened up a different perspective on consumerism and examining human behaviour, what does it mean to be a consumer and to live in a 21st century global capitalistic and democratic system?

Some key questions in this thesis are; In what extend should design efforts reflect our common social ideology? Is it possible to influence existing ideologies by means of design? Can the purpose of design be to make life more comfortable, or should it rather make life more understandable? The observations and critical analysis of Karl Marx made evident that the distribution and the production of material goods were the main causes of the unequal distribution of wealth in the world during the industrial revolution. About a century later we can also see that the system of production and consumption are the main causes of the creation of

environmental problems. From that perspective it can be said that choices about materials and production techniques become relevant to the moral aspect of the work of a designer. In spite of this, a lot of design simply adapts to the more economically favourable production technique of the time and therefore appears not to be in any control, but is subject to the market and production facilities. From this perspective it made me wonder about the relation of design and ideology, because more often designers seem to use moral standpoints when creating a design. But how useful is this really?

2. FEAR OF THE FINITE

Finiteness is an arousing concept; I will elaborate on this in twofold. Why and how people respond with fear to matters that are in their essence concerned with restrictions. How do the limitations of our planet, the idea that we may be running out of resources, and the realisation that things are scarce influence behaviour of people. I will compare some of Spinoza's philosophical theory to current issues in an attempt to shine new light on what this means.

2.1 Where can this fear be found?

Whether conscious or unconscious I notice that the behaviour of an ever growing amount of people is influenced by their awareness of living on a planet that offers humanity finite resources. The current human capacity puts us in a position that demands a different perspective on things. The dependence on these finite resources is a commonly accepted notion at the moment. Of course we ought to realise that in some aspects this is something that people have always had to deal with, this has resulted in the conquering and exploration of land. Maps and detailed images of the entire planet are now available to almost anyone, and information is easier to access than ever before in history.

Because we have this abundance of information in combination with our knowledge of having reached all the corners of the planet, it is no surprise to me that now the trend seems to have become to conserve and make efficient use of what we know that is out there. The stakes are high, because if that is not successfully achieved then desperate survival mechanisms are not unlikely to get the better of people. The most logical

result would be to fight over what is left and fighting over scarcities can quickly change moral standards.

However, the energy that is put into fighting is in my opinion the greatest waste of human energy. If we were to put all army funding and the developed technology for that purpose into uses that would benefit the survival of humanity I believe we could have solved many of the worlds current problems long ago. There is another side to it, I don't think enough people are asking themselves an important question; what is it that I really need? And if I obtain something can I use it effectively? Or would it be better to give someone else who is in that respect more capable, the possibility to make use of it? As opposed of striving to always own more, regardless of what it is. Aren't we driven by the ideology of our society which in a capitalistic system is demanding infinite growth, and gives power to people according to their possessions?

The idea of infinite growth seems to me quite problematic in combination with the realisation of the limitations of our planet. The essence of that problem would be the way in which growth is measured. One alternative to this can be found in Bhutan in their GNH (gross national happiness) instead of the capitalistic GDP. One of the best tools currently available that can be used to get people to want, or to convince them that they need something is by means of commercials and advertisements. These are also the parts of the design discipline that currently generate most money, and are often more expensive and considered more important than

the actual product to be sold. This is a lot of energy put into showing people what it is that they are supposed to obtain.

Are people's principles really that mouldable? Is there an evil system that indoctrinates people and creates false ideas of choice that making people spend their earned money on products that they are told to want or even need? Or is it just creating an environment in which the wants and needs that these people already intrinsically possess are allowed to be expressed and put to use? Does the system serve itself or its subjects? When formulated like this it is clear that the latter is preferred and the former isn't, yet that doesn't say anything about the truth of the statements. Many people dislike advertisement but it is really peoples own insecurity that makes it work. It is quite obvious that people often like other people to want what they have, people are subject to approval by their environment. I see this as a rather perverse concept that plays with peoples desires.

It becomes evident when you see how children when given different toys can end up wanting to play with the same one. This has often very little to do with the actual characteristic of the toy. It is wanted because they know the other has it and they both know there is only one available. If after mediation of an adult the toy is given to the child who had not had it yet but wanted it so dearly, and the other will totally neglect it, what can follow is that later none of them want it anymore. The thing that is essentially wanted is the attention of the other. Possessive behaviour starts to develop at the age of two years and has shown to appear in all people, across all cultures.

The difference is the rules of the culture that they will have to live in. Philippe Rochat *(Child and Adolescent Development, 2010)* argues:

"Social life revolves around the sharing of resources that are typically scarce or 'in demand'. More often than not supplies are limited. This is the basic economic premise of social life, as first pointed out by Adam Smith (1776)".

The idea that wanting to own something not for its intrinsic characteristic but rather for the sake of owning (showing of) appears to be inherent to human nature. Methods have been developed to get children to come to peaceful resolutions in arguments about possession, because every child goes through this period already at the age of two, when the brain isn't fully developed and needs to learn about how to deal with the concepts of owning and sharing. But it nevertheless seems that very few people have done so successfully. It is most obvious in phenomena like hypes, trends and fashion. Concepts that are empty of true value. The value of the opposite I find in design like that of Dieter Rams, and it appears to be exactly what he aims for when I found this quote, (Less and More" Exhibition, Design Museum, London, 2009) :

''I hate everything that is driven by fashion. From the beginning it was hating the sixties way of styling. Especially the cars, they changed their styling every two years to sell new ones. Which has nothing to do with good design."

2.2 True value and empathy

What I think many people lack to do is to ask questions about why they want something, what it will do for them or how is it going to improve their lives? I see people in an ongoing struggle placing themselves in a world shaped by limitations, but at the same time perversely enjoy this disposition. This makes it obvious to me that some form inequality is embedded in the ideology of today's society. Some extreme situations have shown that empathic behaviour is likely to diminish in the case of scarcity. That is why I think that if we are able at all, to overcome inequality, it would certainly help to know what is of true value to us.

Empathy or compassion seem inevitably linked with doing good, but it should not be mistaken that something so obviously good is actually faulty. Especially because I think compassion from a person who values the invaluable is misplaced. It can even become quite cynical seeking confirmation of a position of superiority in other people. I am not saying there is a problem with acts of compassion per se, but it is neither a solution in itself. If the idea is not that the pitied will be enabled to make use of exactly that which the compassionate person has at its disposal, and this will be agreed on by both parties to be the final goal, then it does not seem very useful to me. Creating trust and understanding of both parties in order to generate a common goal, would be essential. Pitying and giving just confirms the existence of inequality. Some people may even fear sharing will interfere with their own interest. But how can there be a conflict of interest if we have mutual understanding and acceptance firmly set first? This makes the

practice of a dialectical method essential. If we stop to do the silly activity of depriving the dignity of other people in the name of charity, in combination with a certain arrogance. And start to acknowledge that the reason to be concerned with the life of someone else is to try to create a more beneficial situation for the whole through sharing more unconditionally. I think with this awareness it is possible to think about more lasting solutions. Concern out of pity is closely related to envy. The idea of giving attention to other people regardless of who they are is what really matters, and this must be done entirely unconditional. The envy can be for the fact that these people are not concerned with useless stuff, the subconscious awareness that someone's own ways are actually corrupted and undesirable. It is hard to step out of the ideology of a society, and accept that there are people out there that don't care about the sharpness and amount of pixels on a TV screen or the processing power of a computer. It is even harder to admit that a seemingly more simplistic model works better than a complex one. People prefer shadow plays in their native cave over real events, too often.

2.3 The relation of sustainability and the finite.

The concept of sustainability appears to be a reaction on the threat of the limitations of our planet and our dependence on some of its finite resources. It is essential to actively ensure the environment is not exploited to the point of exhaustion, but through exploitative use of the terminology itself, sustainability has become a confusing term. Mostly I think this is due to unclear guidelines about whether and when something is actually sustainable and how this relates to what is environmentally friendly. Controlling the

environment is a good example of a "wicked problem". It is so complex that it is almost impossible to be sure about the consequences of one action on the entire system, or as Buckminster Fuller (Operating manual for spaceship earth, 1969, p.22) metaphorically stated:

"There is nothing in the chemistry of a toenail that predicts the existence of a human being" and *"There is nothing about the gases given off respiratory by Earth's green vegetation that predicts that those gases will be essential to the life support of all mammals aboard Spaceship Earth. Universe is synergetic. Life is synergetic."*

"Saving the planet" integrated in the 'western' capitalistic consumerism ideology is quite problematic, mainly because it seems to require cooperation from the entire global population, across countries and cultures. Only a change in the idealism of a society can propagate the right hypotheses and promote a certain vision, enabling people to work together. To be part of an idealism seems to redefine the rules of what is possible, small steps that appear to support the greater cause will generate enough satisfaction to keep believing in it, despite not seeing immediate results. It is possible for me to know that it doesn't change anything whether I do or do not separate garbage for recycling. But it does not matter, it takes more effort not to do it, because I would be acting against the morality of the idealism that I am functioning in. This creates a certain moral conflict on a personal level. I know it doesn't immediately benefit me and I don't see any results, but still I choose to do it. Also because every society is driven by idealism, there are no real personal feelings that matter to it. This way personal conflicts may proof not to be so personal after all because of

influences from the ideology, thus creates some invisible power that is not a conspiracy theory of a small group of elitist imposed on society. Those kind of theories I see as just another way of creating a fictional scapegoat. Almost like in religion responsibility is left to the deity, if you follow some obscure prescription of live, which can never be put into practice. Because the theory requires an enormous amount of relativisation and is therefore entirely open to interpretation, rendering itself meaningless. More useful to consider would be to see myself as a person who can be held responsible for its actions. Of course I am aware of the fact that it is impossible to continuously feel responsible for the unrelated complex structure in which we live. But I am even more aware of the fact that there is no use in putting the blame onto something random.

Spinoza (1677) argues:

"A thing is said to be finite in its kind which can be limited by another thing of the same kind. E.g., a body is said to be finite because we can always conceive another larger than it. Thus a thought is limited by another thought. But a body cannot be limited by a thought or a thought by a body."

I think this is a very interesting definition of what it means for something to be finite, what is important is that it talks about finite in its own kind. Something that is overtaken by something that is of its kind but larger/more powerful. It leads Spinoza also to the conclusion that infinity exists meaning it is the greatest thing possible. There has to be something so great that there is nothing greater than it. This he argues is prove of the existence of a deity which is present in everything we know. Somewhat

similar reasoning that looks at it from a different angle, formulated proactively is this quote of Buckminster Fuller:

"In order to change an existing paradigm you do not struggle to try and change the problematic model. You create a new model and make the old one obsolete."

Create a new model that is the better one in that kind. Yet another quote of Albert Einstein confirming this is:

"No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it."

I would like to think about what implications this has concerning the human activity effecting the earth's ecosystem. We cannot destroy the ecosystem because we are incapable of producing anything like it. The only thing we do is struggle to survive within the system we have, and inevitably will destroy it due to the disability to see the complete picture. No new models are created, or at least very rarely. The earth's ecosystem is only finite if human activity leads to creating another system of the same kind larger/better than it. It is inevitable that we are influencing this system vital to live. The way we function at present is too inefficient and ineffective to the common goal of survival. The question is whether the transition between the current ecosystem and the changes put into action by human activity will be smooth enough for our own survival.

Steve jobs said in arguably the most important interview on the development of the personal computer (D5 conference interview, 2007) :

"We build the products that we want to use ourselves''

If we want to design any product of any kind we need to look at what that product serves, because the task of every art is to serve its subject, and thereby itself. If it is for instance personal electronic devices then it is ourselves because the needs of those other people, Steve Jobs in accordance to the rule of Spinoza claims, can be considered of the same kind as our own, because we are all human. And that could count for almost everything that people design for other people. This may seem like a self-centred approach of a designer saying I just want to make this because I like it, but knowing that Steve jobs was strongly influenced by the philosophy of Gandhi, it changes meaning. The self is seen to be equal to the whole. There shouldn't be a distinction:

"The ultimate station Gandhi assigns is nonviolence that stems from two main points. First, if according to the divine reality all life is one, then all violence committed towards another is violence towards oneself, towards the collective, whole self, and thus "self"-destructive and counter to the universal law of life, which is love.''

Source: http://www.gandhiserve.org/information/brief_philosophy/brief_philosophy.html (December, 2013)

If this is truly understood and practiced, there is no violence towards the other because you would hurt yourself. But if you keep doing everything from the point of view that what you want or need, others want and need as well, doesn't your vision become limited, and make you lose track of reality? In most philosophical theories this would not proof to be an issue. This would

for instance not be problematic for Descartes, because thought is the only reliable thing to us and senses are deceiving. So we have only ourselves to rely on for truth. Other philosophers made similar claims, if there is something that we all have in common then that may have come from a previous state of being which we all emerged from, and this is the only real truth. Clearly examined in Plato's Meno (Holbo & Waring, 2002), starting with the question:

"Meno - Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is acquired by teaching or by practice; or if neither by teaching nor practice, then whether it comes to man by nature, or in what other way?"

If what is good for us is good for others, and the inference is true as well, then it wouldn't matter which position you take when designing. Whether trying to design something that is good for yourself or for others, either way it will benefit the whole because we are of the same kind, thus have similar needs. The way I see it is that the only way to be selfish therefore would be not to share and make available to others your ideas or creations. If Steve Jobs would have been working with a team of specialist to create a sturdy aluminium laptop case, and then keep it to themselves that would have been selfish, but there was no logic in doing so because the product design team worked to make a product for millions of people, yet the thing that was most useful to them was what they thought they wanted themselves.

When designing for a minority it becomes interesting. This is where we are confronted with the fact that we may not be aware of needs that

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exist. We need to learn about a new part of ourselves to make a successful design. Empathy is needed, but there is no reason that this empathic part makes it better design. I don't think that the target group can be a measurement of good or bad design. Good or bad design I would distinguish on the ground of whether it is well executed and exceeds the stage of an idea. If it communicates well and allows for itself to be criticised. It can then at least show a true or falseness of the idea and be ready for further development. It is not important which target group the design aims at.

What I think is important to remember is to be concerned with something that is actual, something that has relevance, not because of some moral obligation, but simply because it is more inspiring. Although I am not in full agreement, I have to quote Victor Papanek (Design for the real world, 1971, p.18) because I think his criticism is well grounded, and useful to consider:

"Design and art can easily become a never-ending search for novelty, until newness-for-the- sake-of-newness becomes the only measure. It is at this point that many different versions of novelty begin to create many different esoteric consumer cliques, and the designer with his wares may become more and more alienated from his society and from the functional complex."

His fear of creating many different esoteric consumer cliques I don't see as very problematic. Nevertheless it does sometimes feel like there is a useless and endless search for novelty.

3. THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

The general idea of progress is often blindly accepted. We are living in a society driven by this idea yet there aren't much common goals to strive for. What bothers me is that what it means to be in progress is rarely criticised. In the words of Buckminster Fuller (1969, p.3):

"Such as the fact that more than half of humanity as yet exists in miserable poverty, prematurely doomed, unless we alter our comprehensive physical circumstances. It is certainly no solution to evict the poor, replacing their squalid housing with much more expensive buildings which the original tenants can't afford to reoccupy. Our society adopts many such superficial palliatives. Because yesterday's negatives are moved out of sight from their familiar locations many persons are willing to pretend to themselves that the problems have been solved. I feel that one of the reasons why we are struggling inadequately today is that we reckon our costs on too short sighted a basis and are later overwhelmed with the unexpected costs brought about by our short-sightedness."

This is what I also feel, there is a lot of bad planning that leads to unexpected results, this short-sightedness bothers me. Of course looking into the future is an impossibility and no design or plan will be perfect. But nevertheless this may not become an excuse to stop trying.

Progress is I believe in many cases, if not always very subjective. I can see how progress can be fuelled by the rethinking of a product, but what happens is that it allows people to externalise their need of development on a personal level into the product. Meaning that having the latest of technology creates an illusion of progress. It can suck people into a world where everything is designed for them end creativity is not motivated. People

will buy the latest smart phone often not because of its amazing capabilities but because it is the latest and gives them status. Therefore the illusion to be part of a superior group which owns the latest technology is what would automatically make your life better. Meanwhile, it strengthens the position of the company that sold it to you, and making you more dependent on them. It is a question not many people ask themselves when technology is concerned. The business model is very simple: Owning an advanced piece of technology is status, and through status you acquire power. And if the majority is convinced the others have to follow. Especially with social networks and communication technologies, because if you're not using it, you are tactically eliminated from the social game of live that is so precious to us. Nobody is concerned with the durability of the products, it matters how soon you acquire it, not how long it may last.

I see design and progress to be very much related, because design history started roughly during the industrial revolution, a period in which the idea of progress by means of technology became more dominant. Many forms of design have the task to bridge the gap between people and technology. The tendency to often aim at improving existing situations, by means of testing and planning all relates back to what we commonly accept as progress. I was inspired to challenge this view when reading Lucretius and the philosophy of Epicurus that states that:

"*The earliest condition of men resembled that of the beasts, and from this primitive and miserable condition they laboriously reached the existing state of civilization, not by external guidance or as a consequence of some initial*

design, but simply by the exercise of human intelligence throughout a long period." (Bury, 1920, p.13a).

There is a contradiction in that sentence, it is saying that there was no initial design, this basically gives way to people being free to design their own lives and surrounding. This argument supports the liberation from a deity, a view epicureans strongly propagated. But if there was no initial design then does this not prove that making a grand initial predetermined design is clearly not the way to go? And that rather exercise of human intelligence should be preferred?

I think that there is some truth in it. It means that there is no perfect design, but it is more important to keep thinking about important issues so that small steps can be taken that might eventually lead to the preferred outcome. We have to let go of the idea that some initial design of the world or some brilliant idea is going to solve complex problems. Easy solutions are just not likely to solve complex problems. It could be possible to come up with relatively simple solutions, but then it is important to know they will not be easy to realise. Simple and easy do not go together. Just because something is simple in theory does not mean it will be easy in practice, more likely the opposite.

I have found that complication is in many cases the result of ease. And that is what makes technology so precious to us. For instance it is easier for me to write on a laptop than on a type writer, but the typewriter is a much simpler machine. It is easier for me to take a car to get somewhere

than to walk, but a car is much more complex than shoes. Thus ease generates complexity. It's just a reminder that when a product should create ease, it is likely that greater complexity is needed to achieve that goal.

4. MATERIALISED IDEOLOGY

What I am searching for is a clearer definition of why some products are and remain to be known as designer products. What are the things that come into being without being ''designed'', how do they come about? There are many types of designers aiming for a range of target groups, but how do they choose the things that they concern themselves with when thinking about design. Also I question how aware I am myself to be functioning in a world that has been designed in such detail and in so many aspects?

4.1 The designed behaviour

It is fascinating to see how behaviour of people is influenced by their culture and surrounding and how subjective their perception is of it.

Despite the possibility to get a lot of information about different subjects that have made society the way it is, little information makes it to people, simply because of the way the information is delivered. If it is true that the majority of people have little knowledge about the world they're living in, perhaps design and art function to clarify some of these things by attaching meaning and historical value to specific objects. Of course no design will be created with a hundred percent complete understanding, and thus can fail in some ways, and may become successful in some other unexpected way. unexpected due to technical or cultural changes for instance the idea of what kind of light is preferred or a light source changes and some previously important considerations to the functioning of the lampshade become irrelevant. Another example being all the accessories that are produced for electronic devices. A mobile phone becoming out of

date is one thing, but all the cables and cases that were designed based on it also become obsolete with it. Enormous amounts of waste are the result of this. Unnecessary waste in many cases, because the voltage of a charger for instance remains the same, the shape doesn't change significantly, but the plug is different, or a cable broke. How to create a product that avoids this? perhaps more replaceable parts, or easier recycling and on demand production with the use of 3d printing? or simply higher quality products that are more durable? In any case the attitude of the consumer does have to change in line with these production methods. Informing could become important then, but the tricky thing is that when people are informed they can react according to their own interest, they are "empowered" so they can rebel against it. Larger companies have a more refined strategy, where they create the feeling of empowerment but don't really give away what they are after, and this is perhaps the foundation of our cynical ideology as described by Slavoj Žižek.

Only a strong concept can survive in order to become known as relevant design. It may be tested and used, but has to keep a strong second layer of appreciation in its original form. If we agree that reality is not ideal, these designs can never become fully effective. They will be partially real, but mostly idealistic. It becomes a representative of a theory or set of ideas, which is free from the need to be integrated in reality. It transcends in the eye of the knowledgeable beholder the reality in which it is placed. This type of design is allowed to become part of a different world, a world that exists separate from the real world. It will be raised on pedestals and exhibited in

white cubes, and discussed by a select few. A form of timeless design or design classics are created on rare occasions, and a lot of waste will exist around it, copying and misinterpreting the originals. If what used to be a design is produced and manifests itself in reality, what does it become? It could certainly not stay design, according to the many definitions of design that I have found so far. There is a distinction made between those products that become known as design, thus labelled and marketed as design. As opposed to all the other things that people designed which are not so specifically recognised under that label, because they became something else?

What I could make up from the popular use of design is this: Anything that is known as design is in a stage of development, if a seemingly finished product remains to be known as design, (for instance an Eames chair is a designer chair) the emphasis remains to be on the ideology and the process in which it was created, which in turn puts it on a pedestal and makes it into a role model for other designers, and helps it to stand the test of time.

4.2 Design vs. ideology

What are the links between the two following terms, and what happens if they are combined? :

Ideology	The body of ideas reflecting the needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class or culture.
Design	To create or contrive for a particular purpose or effect, to conceive or fashion in the mind.

Design, a term that concerns inventing, creating, improving and criticizing, should work very well in combination with the aspirations of individuals or a group, class or culture. But it doesn't seem smart to rely upon individual ingeniousness of people who are stuck in a systematic routine. People have to go to work to make sure that the routine is done correctly. Any ideas of change or about innovation in their direct environment are often not valued very high. Too many people still have to function as machines. As opposed to Marx's *"They don't know it, but they are doing it"* Slavoj Žižek (2013) states in his documentary the following to be the case at present:

> *"Cynical ideology functions like this: I know very well what I am doing but I am still nonetheless doing it."*

This is maybe the next stage into accepting our submissive behaviour, but also suggests that it is not a solution. Society that functions like this seems to deny that there is or needs to be a solution. It is almost like saying: *"I am doing it and that's it, period!"*. That sounds to narrow minded to be favourable. It is perhaps also relating to the misinterpretations about research that is done into genes and human nature and behaviour. As research shows we know what causes the birth defects since chromosomes are seen as the "blue prints" or DNA who make us what we are. It is as yet sometimes true and sometimes not, one child might be aggressive due to genetics, another due to experience, and the latter is still the part which most of us have control over. Even without going into the ethical question, it may turn out to be less "good" as it may appear if not used correctly. The age old debate over what is nature or nurture does become clearer. But the altering

of the blue prints/design of human beings according to what the parents or society prefers is quite scary as well.

In analysing these kinds of problems there is often no way to find a definite answer. So, what is preferred? Doing something without knowing it, or knowing to do something that is perhaps not right but nonetheless do it. At present there is another option which is perhaps truer; they are made to do something and at the same time told that it's not right, yet they are continuously tempted into doing it. This is where I see the trap of our current ideology that is defended by the magic words; freedom of choice. Take for instance cigarette packages with warnings on them, they are highly addictive and harmful, but when someone has been allowed to think it is their personal choice it becomes hard to argue with it. What I want to argue is that it has very little to do with personal choice it is addictive and culturally accepted so people who are deceptive to it, do it. You are not obliged to do it but it depends on your character, perhaps DNA or experience whether you are doing it.

The same but without the physical addictive element goes for the promoting of separating garbage, while at the same time it is still fine and easier to throw it all together, or the promoting of organic food. If I take serious the claims then I will walk through supermarkets thinking; do I want to poison myself while eating a vegetable or not? This question is ridiculous and generates only one sensible answer. The underlying conditions generate secondary questions: Can I afford it, do I know enough about it and do I believe in it? And thus organic food becomes a product for the ones who can

afford it, have understanding about what it means, and believe in it. I agree with Žižek (2013) in that it is a quite cynical Ideology we live in. That we have a system in which people believe that these considerations are of a personal origin, there are too many contradictions to be certain. But perhaps this is the illusion we have to accept because this is the only freedom that we can really afford.

5. WASTEFUL EFFICIENCY

Is efficiency really as important and useful as it is often claimed to be? Despite the many logical arguments why efficiency may be necessary I see some problems that are over looked, especially in human behaviour that compensates efficient use of things, without really creating more effective processes.

5.1 The problem of compensation

Efficiency is a very interesting and useful aspect in any design, whether it is about material use, energy consumption, trying to make the most out of the least is a logical and satisfying goal to pursue. But there are some issues that need consideration, in order to rate the efficiency of something the first thing would be to set boundaries within which to measure. Everything outside of those boundaries is considered irrelevant. Many seemingly successful designs actually failed because after they are implemented into reality they are used differently or have a different effect as expected. The context changes. Even if the final design is a success in many ways that doesn't mean that the original design concept was a success. If I use a pencil to support a plant or stir paint it is still successful as an object, but not in the way intended.

This can be especially true concerning design that aims at some kind of efficiency. For instance energy efficiency as a solution to global warming seems to make a lot of sense at first. Less consumption of natural resources by human activity will help us to have a smaller impact on our environment. But when we take the complexity of human nature into consideration this is not so logical anymore. If people do not truly understand the philosophy

behind the efficiency it is useless. For instance, the municipality of Amsterdam had introduced lower speed limits for cars on a highway crossing the city, aiming to improve air quality. Applying the simple idea that a car consumes much less fuel when driving at 80 in fifth gear instead of 100km/h. A little later people showed their dislike of this plan. Understandable because people don't like to be confronted with government imposed limitations. I see speed limits to be metaphorical for people's incapability of controlling technology. The car or the road should be redesigned so that it is impossible to make an accident, and so that people cannot drive unnecessarily inefficient in the wrong gear or too fast. If the speed limits go up there is a higher risk of accidents, it increases pollution, and decreases the engines efficiency in terms of fuel and wear. But people feel like they are treated unfair by their government, they are allowed to buy a car that can go up to 200 km/h, yet never will they be able to drive this legally. Special equipment to check people and much police work is put into this, the result is angry drivers when they get fined, to me it seems all absolutely purposeless. Why are these cars sold in the first place?

One could argue that it is a case of bad design. The ''connection'' is not right. Cars became cleaner and more fuel efficient and this is being used as a reason to raise speed limits back the old standard. The government, the Industrial designers and engineers aimed for the same thing, a healthier environment, manoeuvred into that position by the common ideology. In an ideological world the limiting of the speed and the more efficient cars would have been able to improve the air quality in twofold. But what happened is

that one is compensated by the other. The problem generated an easy solution, the restriction, and the technology made it possible to nullify that restriction. People tend to favour technology over restrictions. Many smart designs seem to come forth out of restrictions. Restrictions thus create a fertile design environment. Can a designer anticipate on these matters? Nullifying restriction before they are applied, by means of good design?

Products that are produced with the most efficiency, for instance injection moulding, are automatically devaluated by society. The efficiency is compensated because it devalued and the material became associated with a disposable product even if it does not need to be the case. People do not like to be limited by restriction but whatever new technology makes possible, people don't seem to change much. Design should solve problems through a positive approach, in order for the user to be able to function naturally, without restriction. But if used as a measure of efficiency which only aims to satisfy the user, it justify all other inefficiencies. This reminds me of the conclusion of one of the earlier discussions in Plato's The Republic:

"The task of every art is to serve its subjects, and not itself. Everything he says and everything he does is said or done with his subject in mind, with a view of what is good and appropriate for the person or thing that is under his authority.''

A good design has the potential of solving problems more effectively than restricting policies, but when restrictions are being applied the need of a new design becomes suddenly more viable. In an ideal world design has no viability, because there is no need for change, and there wouldn't be any

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restriction. What could perhaps be interesting is to focus on everything that is farthest from ideal, an environment that is extremely restrictive to the people living in it. As I mentioned before, design seems often to be an ideological undertaking, the gap between the extremely non-ideal settings and the ideology will be great.

The good thing is that in a non ideal situation there is a real need which is fuelled by these conditions. While travelling I have experienced many situations which according to my ideological standards show themselves as such. Like last year (2013) the academy invited me among others to join a short trip to the industrial area of Kumasi in Ghana. This specific industrial area called the Suame Magazine, is in many ways in sharp contrast to Holland. At first sight it appears to be terribly unorganised, the roadside is scattered with shops selling imported old cars and car parts. It appeared dirty and messy, and too randomly structured to be functioning effectively. When thinking about it a bit I realised that of course dirt is inseparably linked to old cars, so this is no surprise. What struck most later is that there is something very human to that place, the informality of the organisation made it charming in a way. Perhaps it triggers a certain nostalgia, and even having just spend two weeks there it was possible to walk around and have a one off cast iron object made, and have sheet metal bended into a stool, which I could have properly spray painted at another shop for a fraction of what it would have cost me in Holland. But more importantly I could easily come in direct contact with people that would make something according to my proposed idea, which could have been as

simple as a cardboard model. There may be a lack of formal planning, but the spontaneous opportunities offered by this system create a friendly place for creative expressions. This informal situation has inspired me, as much as it made me loose believe in some well established design methods. It is not necessary to condemn all formal structure, but I claim there would be a great added value is if the benefits of this kind of informality are more appreciated.

The Suame is a place stuffed with products that all have previously been designed in offices with rigid planning and high production efficiency, and well thought out advertising campaigns, but certainly not with this environment in mind. Some brand new cars claim to be environmentally friendly because they are more fuel efficient, yet become more complicated to manufacture and repair. Without supporting the tools to sustain a design along its lifecycle, the environmental or even economical benefits will always be empty claims. The efficiency improvements are perhaps true in the rigid mind of a car engineer, but without any consideration of the human factor in the long term. In fact the only thing it does is creating a financial gain for the first buyer and manufacturer. Aiming to increase dependence, and binding the customer to a company, by selling a highly complex product with patented technology and restricted adaptability, claiming all rights of developed software and hardware. Adaptability and versatility have perhaps more potential in creating more efficiency if we consider the complete picture. Thus I claim that there is only one way that efficiency can be useful especially when considering the environment and that is if it zooms out and

takes into consideration more complete systems, and this is very rarely the case.

Dymaxion, a word coined by R. Buckminster Fuller in 1930, means the principle of deriving maximum output from a minimum input of material and energy, best realized in his geodesic domes. It sounds very logical, why would anyone try to do more to achieve less? His way of looking at things is inspiring to me, a simple statement like that, any physical object is much more than just a composition of material, sounds so obvious but at the same time often overlooked when efficiency is concerned.

5.2 Economic efficiency

Finding a use for anything that has potential but is not utilized is what economic efficiency promotes. My question is whether this is really what we should aim for, or can there be situations where it is better to allow things to be unutilized. Slavoj Žižek (2013) made an interesting comment in his documentary The pervert's guide to ideology that made me doubt existing assumptions:

"Capitalism is all the time in crises this is precisely why it appears almost indestructible, crises is not its obstacle it is what pushes it forward towards self-revolutionizing, self-extended self-reproduction. Always new products, the other invisible side of it is waste, tremendous amounts of waste. We should not react to this kind of waste by somehow trying to get rid of it. Maybe the first thing to do is to accept this waste, to accept that there are things out there that serve nothing. To break out of this eternal cycle of functioning"

Even though I believe that Žižek has a very useful critical analysis of our consumerism culture. His possible solution which he begins admittedly with 'maybe' is not really convincing, but nevertheless worth thinking about. Because the eternal cycle of functioning seems undoubted. He is saying to break out of this cycle, but how can we? Everything is so strongly dependent on our concept of economic efficiency. It is what drives most of the world to constantly make use of whatever is not utilized to the benefit of society. Especially the incredible amounts of waste are not economically efficient. It benefits no one, only polluting our environment. Nevertheless it came forth out of the striving for efficiency. If there was no striving for efficiency in production we wouldn't have had injection moulded disposable products. Those are exactly the ones that cause a big waste problem. There probably wouldn't have been a functioning nuclear power plant if energy efficiency was never of so much importance. In economic terms it makes sense that: In a competitive equilibrium in the market the buyers who trade are those who value the good most highly, and the sellers who trade are those who value the good the least. Is there any other pattern of trade that results in someone being better off without anyone being worse off? But this assumption defending economic efficiency can only create equality if every trader has true knowledge of the value of the goods. This shows the importance of the role of marketing, advertisement, and design in society to continuously manipulate our evaluation of the value of products.

Maybe people have to first accept that they are incapable of making the right decisions, because they don't really know what is good for them.

Because if all value is merely based on what value buyers give to it, then the most perfect situation is for the seller is to manipulate the ideas about value of those who buy. Surely many people believe they are already trained in avoiding false advertisement, and marketing tricks. But also they have to recognise their knowledge is limited, because strategies become more advanced over time. What I am asking myself is how to be genuine and truthful in design while it is a profession often utilised as a tool for deception.

6. MODES OF PRODUCTION

If a design is not made to improve an existing situation then the least it can do is to make sure it keeps up with the quality standards and is well thought out. Perhaps that it is not really design anymore because of the lack of focus on creativity. It would perhaps be good if what is defined as design becomes redefined, and preferably in such a way that it will free itself from the need to impress on a superficial level.

Due to the blurred vision of many people by the propaganda of companies that are supported by the current system of production, the value of a product is often much higher than that of the quality of live, especially of someone at the lowest parts of the production chain. I see this as unjust, considering the ideas of the functioning of an art or profession towards its subjects, as elaborated upon in Plato's Republic. Extreme examples can be found where the consumer and the producer are both suffering for the sake of keeping the production going. In other words the people serve the product and not the other way around. I think this should be avoided at all cost. A more logical aim would be to design for situations that are at present least effective, and efficiency can be used as a goal only if all factors are incorporated into a model. Our world is already saturated with people trying to reach efficiency in all narrowness of established systems and the results are obvious, wealth distribution remains unequal.

There are different ways to look at production, to see society and to evaluate success. Some of the most interesting observations about this I have found when looking into some of the writings of Karl Marx. The way he saw

society being based on the modes of material production at the time of the industrial revolution in England, may still be useful. Especially noting the relevance of production techniques in dictating the functioning of social, political and economic society. A designer is in a way subject to the available production techniques, but can also influence it by choosing a certain material for a product. Many well-known designers of the last century have simply adapted to available production, and stimulated this in return. The best known example being the tubular steel frames for furniture, of which Mart Stat has admittedly profited generously. It is not about making some kind of moral standpoint by considering the production. But with the concepts of cradle-to-cradle and sustainability and fair-trade there seems to be a shift towards a more complete moral tag attached to products, which often changes the value accordingly.

"Social life is based on economic life, upon how things are produced within a society. Social relations are based on economic relations. Above these rises a corresponding super structure of laws and social consciousness which reflects the economic structure. In this way the ideological and intellectual life of a society is entirely determined by the way things are produced within it." (Karl Marx)

It is not the execution of Marx's ideals in the failed communist systems of the last century that I am interested in. It is his insight in capitalism and especially production that I think can still be very useful, not to propose a radical alternative, but to use this insight to re-evaluate the present state of global industrial production.

7. NEED AND WANT

Aesthetics can be deceptive, simply because something "looks good" it can be assumed to work well. If the skill of creating the right aesthetics is mastered it becomes a valuable tool. It can be nice to play with form and material to give the "right" appearance to an object. It makes perfect sense if the intention is to clarify the use of a product. In the words of Victor Papanek (Design for the real world, 1971, p.5):

"It is all quite simple: aesthetic value is an inherent part of function."

True as this may be, aesthetics are not always serving the purpose of clarifying use, and may focus on just getting a product over the counter to the benefit of the seller, while it doesn't actually meet the requirements it pretends to have. Most obvious in the case of faked material representations. Our current cynical ideology may lead people to love to be fooled by design. It just works so well. The moment that you can't exactly describe for what reason you want something, but want it nevertheless, that is successful yet manipulative design. I love this sentence from The perverts guide to ideology, where Slavoj Žižek uses the kinder surprise egg, as a metaphor to explain ideology:

"This is how every ideology has to work, it is never just meaning, it also has to work as an empty container open to all possible meanings. It is, you know, that gut feeling that we feel when we experience something pathetic and we say; oh my god, I am so moved there is something so deep, but you never know what this depth is, it is a void."

More and more products contain computers, we are already used to laptops, tablets, and smart phones, but also cars, T.V.'s and many more are complex designs and need to look minimal and intuitive, while they are really incomprehensible pieces of equipment. People can accept these kinds of products through the functioning of elaborate design only. some of the designs function so well that in many cases technology is accepted as an almost natural extension. I am not talking about implanted chips that sound futuristic and generate a lot of unnecessary moral discussion. unnecessary because the fact is we have already for a long time accepted that our natural senses and bodies are limiting our human capabilities. People have always lived with a limited understanding of the mechanisms of their own body and mind, and the functioning of the world around them. It has not been shown that in the case of technological complexity this would be any different.

People like designs that feel intuitive, it is no obstacle when to know it encapsulates great complexity, basically the complexity has to be hidden in order to benefit from it. The importance is that it has the capability to allow people do an incredible amount of things with more ease. The symbolism is in some cases quite obvious. As we can see in the first Apple logo of Newton under the tree, the initial symbolism was about curiosity and creativity. *"Newton… A Mind Forever Voyaging Through Strange Seas of Thought Alone."* (Inscription first Apple logo). Soon it was simplified to the famous apple with a bite out of it, the symbol of lust and knowledge bitten into. In the case of Apple the idea seems to be that design does not need to add a lot of things.

8. METABOLIC PRODUCT DESIGN

A product can be successful by simply tapping into an natural human desire, with no certainty of progress, only of change. Creating meaning is what Papanek (1971, p.5) describes as the key feature to a good design:

"Shoving coins around on a board is a design act in miniature because design as a problem-solving activity can never, by definition, yield the one right answer: it will always produce an infinite number of answers, some 'righter' and some 'wronger'. The Brightness' of any design solution will depend on the meaning with which we invest the arrangement."

      I want to propose a new terminology concerning the making and the use of products because all the known terms have failed to describe what I want to say. The concept of metabolism applied to the use of a product. Metabolic as an abstract definition, meaning it is any basic process of organic functioning or operating that can be divided into:

Anabolism	Constructive metabolism; the synthesis in living organisms of more complex substances from simpler ones.
Catabolism	Destructive metabolism; the breaking down in living organisms of more complex substances into simpler ones, with the release of energy.

      If we replace anabolism for production, and catabolism for consumption, we can maybe make a more clear abstract definition of some problems. Anabolic efforts have lead to over-complication of products causing them to be pretty difficult to digest in the catabolic system,

disrupting the general metabolism. In this concept people feel guilty to consume not because it is a destructive effort, but on the contrary, because we want to, yet are aware that we fail to fully digest anything with the release of energy. Metaphoric for this are the plastic eating seagulls of the pacific ocean. The catabolism fails, because it is not in line with the anabolism. The metabolic system is therefore in its entirety ineffective, and produces tremendous amounts of waste. If it would be effective it would generate less waste and more energy.

Human beings are functioning most of the time as opportunistic catabolic creatures, and nature delivers all the necessities for promoting this behaviour. Any anabolic effort should be promoted and its execution decentralised for otherwise the gap becomes too wide. At present the opposite is the case, designing and production are too far removed from the user, this is disruptive and makes products impossible to digest.

9. CONCLUSION

What becomes increasingly evident to me is that design should not be treated as a monotonous superior plan attempting to shape things according to the presupposed needs and wants of people. Many successful and culturally significant designs are a clear reflection of the common ideology of the society and the time in which they are created. Today people are tending to look for more individualistic expression, but only to a certain degree in which it stays within the boundaries of a recognizable branded visual language. I think it is useful to accept that there will always be some degree of failure. And maybe a solution is to allow more of the failures.

Maybe design should function merely a set of rules defining a system in which a clear goal is set and tools are made available, allowing the user to fill in for themselves what works best or is preferred most in their situation. This demands the designer to be less dictatorial. It is a type of design where the designer is less concerned with the interests of a company or marketing. It should create a position where current wealth distribution should eventually be undermined, in order to diminish vague production facilities controlled by obscure trade that have proved to cause unhealthy situations for the majority of the world's population. In the present system a designer is still often expected to treat users as lazy passive consumers, solving their problems and making their life comfortable. What I think we should do is facilitate opportunistic behaviour. This element is a powerful characteristic intrinsic to human nature. Perhaps we should stimulate people to anatomise their products more, create a design that is meant to be taken apart and

understood. At the moment the introduction of small scale production machines like 3D printers are up-coming, but these are still rather inaccessible, and are likely to produce more waste if not used with the right understanding. Many products have grown unnecessarily complicated due to the focus on production efficiency, this efficiency is absolutely unimportant if we consider the effective use of the product after it is bought. It seems that the actual effective use of a product after it is bought is not of much interest to companies with smart marketing strategies. They will sell it to people by means of seduction, and mischievously utilise any social ideal.

Some alternatives are found in smaller production striving for quality in order to gain recognition. This may sound like I am promoting a romanticised idea of the craftsman, but that is not exactly what I am aiming for. What I see to be possible is to make a next step in which the rules of what is left to large scale, small scale and personal designing are redefined. Recycling, personalization and modularity should function in a system that is understandable and relatively transparent. Personalisation, is already recognised to be something that people are missing in industrial production. The scenario that I envision is one where a product becomes more well understood, and appreciated. The consumer needs to become successful in either decomposing the product in its continues catabolic tendencies, or manage to reinforce its potential by means of upgrading or repair.

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"Our society adopts many superficial palliatives. Because yesterday's negatives are moved out of sight from their familiar locations many persons are willing to pretend to themselves that the problems have been solved."

R.B. Fuller (1969)