



# Creating Curiosity

Approaching ideals to rise a new generation of industrial manufacturing

From Alexander Spiliopoulos / Gerrit Rietveld Academie 2011



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## Introduction

"When something exceeds the ability to understand how it works it becomes truly magical" Jonathan Ive, chief designer of Apple Computers said this in the promotional video for the iPad. The iPad itself isn't that important here. It's a technical device more or less potent depending on the way you look at it. I remember this statement because I was quite intrigued by it. It evoked a duality of affirmation and aversion in me. On one hand it is a true sentence because it outlines the peoples' ardor for the fantastic and the strong will to get hold of it; on the other hand this sentence negates the state of our pronounced society to favor rationality over magic. What Ive says reminded me on what individuals of our globalized society are facing:

A form of distance from the physicality of objects and the convergency towards more elusive variables like beliefs how an object appears to work or where it appears to come from. Whether commodities or comestibles, this paradoxical circumstance comprises most everyday products. People are sold an image of something, an illusion that accentuates the qualities of products.

I see these deceiving elements in marketing and consequential in their way of production as absurd. I am confronted with a lack of content in consumption, while I am in a supermarket to buy food, in a warehouse to get a needed commodity or while I am searching the internet for a technical device.

My ideals, which I consider a synthesis of me being a conscientious person, following common sense and reasonable calculation, are triggering a voice inside of me, which keeps on saying:

"This is not how it is supposed to be. This is absurd!"

As a person I like to make people aware of this point of view. As a designer, I want to contribute to make a change to the current production circumstances of commodities. My script is devoted to the future of society, how it perceives itself, how it wants to perceive itself and how it is able to improve and to change itself. The way a society relates to consumption is an important element in this equation and forms the basis of how products should be created, produced and distributed.

## Part 1 : Observations

### Chapter 1: The relation of fictional perfection and an absurd reality

I would like to introduce this chapter with fictional story in a future not to far away.

Imagine a society without manufacturing capability and with no service provision at all except in the sector of selling and distribution. Given the case that you have money, wherever it comes from, you are buying your preprepared food and goods from the local gigantic supermarket. Comestibles and commodities are offered together since it is more convenient. Only three companies survived the worldwide competition. The White Industries Company is the most expensive because it only sells goods produced with trendsetting methods. The Black Industries Company has the reputation of being the cheapest because it sells goods produced solely in economically efficient manners. The Grey Industries Company doesn't make this classification and has a divers mixture of both. All three giant supermarkets belong to consolidated group named BGW short for 'Best of Goods in the World' written in a black, a grey, and a white capital letter. Because of the sheer size of those chain stores they are located a little bit outside the populated areas. To go there for your everyday necessities is no real fun. Its just an overload of things and quite ugly because the store looks more like a storage depot than a market for your specific taste. It's incredibly exhausting to wander around looking for the few things you need. Luckily all these supermarkets have an incredibly designed website and you can have everything delivered. You are able to create your virtual supermarket whether it should look like a farmer's market or like an oriental bazar. Maybe you are a proud italian and you only want to shop for classic italian goods hearing italian music. That is all feasible and much more. BGW constantly adds new sensual impressions giving you the possibility to experience everything. Your consumption behavior is saved and updated towards your specified search filters giving you the full joy of fulfilling you needs. Through interactive programs you are even able to share your shopping adventures with friends through the web. The level of reality reaches a sphere were it appears more real than in the newly introduced third remake of Mary Poppins where you can see her and the incredible bottomless carpetbag from every four dimensional perspective—oh wait there is an update, BGW produced the film and now you can mix the film with your own shopping experience filling everything you buy into her bag.

A short while after the initial purchase your goods are delivered to your doorstep. Since you selected the farmer's market option everything you bought is in a compostable natural bass basket. After unpacking you throw the basket away since it is your fourth time ordering with this option and you really don't need so many baskets.

You feel like having some of the organically produced antipasti you ordered with the freshly crisped up white bread still warm when delivered. Satisfied with your favorite dish you feel like meeting a friend for real. Maybe going out for a coffee and some fashion shopping.

Outside is a beautiful weather. The sun is shining and great smells come from everywhere. White industry established flagship restaurants and cafés to promote their products. After having a coffee the two of you are visiting the little boutiques in the streets. There is no need to hurry or to be impatient when someone got the last piece. The models are all only for trying them on. You will have them delivered to your home. That way you are also not bothered by the weight and unhandiness of the bags.

A nice day comes to an end but what is this, the sky has darkened and its starting to rain a little. Still not all the streets are equipped with deployable protective sails. But



having Mary Poppins in mind you know that black industries have a promotional stand around the corner selling those beautiful umbrellas she also had.

The End?

Most of the images used in the story already exist, what is not there is the downright global monopoly. We have clear laws against that. Logistics and production techniques are still in their commencement but they are there. The question is whether we would sign this future as good or as bad. Clearly there are no down parts. Maybe all ecological problems have been solved and the products are all soundly produced without any exploitation of people and resources. But is it likely?

The question that follows is whether we would actually want that? Does it reflect ourselves and our way of life? Today's motion into a supermarket is marked by similar developments although they won't reach this level of perfection or elaborateness yet and perhaps appear absurd:

Recently while I was shopping in a local supermarket I was puzzled. When looking at the label from my recently acquired net of onions I saw they came from New Zealand. Costing less than a euro I expected them to be an ordinary local agricultural good. How could these products, which I expected to be locally produced, be brought half way around the world and still be profitable?

Besides the fact that common goods are not necessarily locally produced, people love the idea of goods being traditionally produced and passionately prepared. People want to be remembered of a time when life felt effortless like in their childhood. The cliché of an intact family, a happy home or a harmonic life still are the best selling image in a variety the offers. A related image evokes an emotional connection even if people did not experience this particular tradition or are reminded to their childhood by it.

Attaching goods to these images is a widespread strategy in marketing. With costly designed packagings memories are aroused and the customer is induced to this buyable joy. Even though these memories might never have happened. Grandmother's special recipe and a slightly more illustrative commercial showing grandma standing by the oven, cooking home fries for her hungry pack, eating them faster than she is able to get the crispy golden chunks out of the pan. Relieved and happy as she fulfilled her duty with pleasure she sees her pack beating loose into the summer garden. That all in a precooked package?

We are surrounded by images of hand picked fruits in idyllic fields, hand made products, pure naturally processed goods like jam, cakes, stews and basically everything that comes in a glass, a can, or a cardboard box, all created with love and passion. Our mothers and grandmothers are not around to back a cake? No problem, we find compensation for them on the shelves of supermarkets. Illustrations of picture book grandmothers in the fashion of the 1950s are glancing up from hermetically sealed, industrially produced, drowned-in-sugar apple-cakes. You will find them as well smiling down from the single-service plastic can of strawberry yoghurt, containing 4% of fruit, courting our attention, hoping to win our acceptance.

I am asking myself how these illustrative associations will continue to influence our society in a new generation which maybe has no resemblance to those images at all. To which real memory should it attach the images and which feelings should it arouse?

Homogeneity of products became another formative element appearing in our daily consumer life. Wherever we look we see the same brands, types and characters. Not only manmade products and goods are affected by this development, but also fruits of agriculture. Every supermarket stocks a similar variety of vegetables whether you are in the Netherlands or any other western country. Apples are a good example: In Europe just three of well over 10.000 apple species make up approximately 70 percent

of the market: Golden Delicious, Jonagold and Elster<sup>1</sup>. This homogeneity is not only an economic but also ecological phenomena. A trend, concerning the homogeneity of goods, is that fewer brands supply smaller product ranges in huge quantity. An example presenting the associated group Nestlé, shows how a product variety literary can be canned: While buying out mineral springs and wells from a vast region, all minerals are extracted before bottling and then replaced by adding a uniform composition. For Nestlé besides gaining a uniform taste this procedure was necessary to be able to legally call their product mineral water. In legal terms, mineral water has to come from natural sources otherwise it must be called table water<sup>2</sup>.

Nowadays market chains equip us with standards to which our culture slowly aligns itself. At some point we don't even expect it to be different.

## Chapter 2: The background of goods in the context of global market

Monopoly in game and life—what we once played in our childhood turned out to be ultimate reality. The first unbeatable strategy is to control the market by leaving either way the competitors out of the loop or by being your own competitor. That leads to a trend having fewer brands supply smaller product ranges thus creating a global homogeneity. We are facing these developments without having a real vote in it. Sure, one could argue that we have the power of buying or not buying the products. But in reality we are just overstrained with a conscious analysis of our consuming. In fact the marketing influences us more towards what we might want instead of what we really need. In an interview in german Greenpeace Magazin from 2008 the political scientist Benjamin Barber pronounces that “consumption erodes the public spirit”. His argument is that capitalism perfected the fulfillment of human needs. As a reaction the industry doesn't forge products for requirements but invents requirements for products. Instead of conscious decisions the individual is affected by suggestions forwarded through unconscious channels provided by marketing organs and their strategies. Walden Bello, sociologist and critic of current economy models, has the same thought when responding to Say's law formed in the beginning of the 19th century which said that supply will create its own demand. Bello says that capitalism and with it the global market have many 'acts of movement'. The most destructive one he points out is what Says formulated almost 200 years ago resulting in a demand-creating machinery which transforms lively natural goods into dead economic units and natural richness into dead assets.

My point in this is that today's markets evoke a general indifference in people leading to a lack of interest in these affairs. This alienation pushes people to the feeling that they can't change the market situation. By this behavior an important element for the advancement of our society gets lost—personality. What stays behind is a numbness towards consumption. People are not interested in backgrounds any more. A label does the work of telling people what its qualities are: Healthy, prizewinner, bestseller et cetera. The consumer is kept out of the loop. International sales is the indicator of a product's viability leading to a replaceability of every product. Variety and adaptability does not go well with mass production. The global industry and the global market wouldn't have a perspective if it were stopping to pursue this strategy after fulfilling our needs. A visible effect on everyday products is the illusion of variety. Every supermarket and

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1 according to an article in german wikipedia

2 Nestlé's brand 'Pure Life' - lateron it was called 'purified' water

commodity store has a similar product range creating the picture of global homogeneity. This homogeneity is a key element in the argumentation that global market is the subliminal successor of colonization. The US-american economist Tyler Cowen portrays the duality of global trade being the reason for innovation and variety but also the shrinking of cultural distinction. He argues that global trade is an emotionally charged issue most of all because it shapes our sense of cultural self. He leads back the worldwide becoming of a homogeneous culture to a general rage leading to boycotts and terroristic reaction naming the attack of the World Trade Center in 2001.

Most economists and political scientists seem to have an eye on the overall effects of globalization eager to point out either good or bad. Like Tyler Cowen or Benjamin Barber there are steady opponents of a left or a right wing. Where Cowen poses himself as an overall optimist celebrating examples like the establishment of Reggae music<sup>3</sup> as a global achievement and posing as an intermediary trying to calm down fractions Barber gives a pessimistic view on the world when visualizing "McWorld" and the "bloodless economics of profit".<sup>4</sup>

I have a problem with such approaches because they concentrate on peak levels and isolated examples. These example have a lurid character themselves producing reactions on an emotional basis. Instead of arguing about what is there I would rather talk about what is not there and figure out why it is so.

I think we already know that the human nature has the quality of being highly adaptive and creative. What we seem to not know is how reasonable it really is. The world economic system has the problem of its justification. Humanitarian or non governmental organizations like Attac<sup>5</sup>, the worldwide trade unions and Greenpeace for example have only the power of open criticism but no active voice in it like a veto.

What the societies of the world are thereby confronted with is a dominating system that excludes fields like social politics, occupational safety and health and environmental protection. The World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the influential organs in globalized markets but they are isolated through their complex intergovernmental structure.

I am not criticizing the institutions themselves—in the first place, I like most do not have the insight or farsightedness into the correlations. But what I and other individuals and organizations do and are able to do is to criticize the outcomes that stand in conjunction with these organs.

Since a democratic influence is practically non existent individuals have to make and to encourage each other in making sound decisions within consumer behavior.

Some people do not realize it but depletion is not only a matter of money but also a matter of culture. The deeper we look into the establishments of western civilization the more we see an apparent truth—these establishments mostly are not ours any more and we are just buying them for a rising prize. For half a century globally acting companies have presented us a trend, namely the dislocation of production from its original location to a country where production is cheaper, knowing that the only element that made it cheaper were the low wages paid in this country. This is a factor which is due to change over time and I believe we can feel it already.

What we are left with is that we gave away the power of production capabilities. With doing so we have partly incapacitated and will further incapacitate ourselves to be able to declare our own needs as we severely restricted our individual competence and voice.

I'm not pursuing a political revolt or demanding a boycott; I'm merely pointing out that we have to reevaluate our individual approach parallel to these circumstances.

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3 Gillespie, Nick interview with Cowen, Tyler for Reason Magazin "Really Creative Destruction"

4 Barber, Benjamin; interview article / german Greenpeace Magazin in 2008

5 Attac: Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens

## Chapter 3: Effects on the individual – The fading of traditions

Walden Bello points out that “economic globalization erodes the human condition constantly as ‘being part of nature’ and as ‘being a citizen’”.<sup>6</sup>

What he means is that moments of tangible personal or democratic power seldomly exist in a system that is dominated by impenetrable or incomprehensible rules.

As people who want to naturally interact with their environment, we are consequently linked to the world in a passive way having only a faint voice when we decide over the red or the green apple, mineral or purified water, the black or the white computer and so on.

What we are facing with in this developments is a slow fading of our traditional life. We can have everything at any time. Year-round fruits and vegetables, international goods within days. We don’t need to await anything. A feast every now and then and for sure on Christmas. It’s it still our tradition or not? On the 14th of February you will remind your valentine that you love him or her—a perfectly coordinated mass consumption. Commercials remind us what we have to think of and in which shop to buy it.

Through the body of globalized markets and its most upfront nature as an overall equalizer, the spatial and perceptual gap between people and products grows continuously. Society suffers from the resulting general sense of powerlessness following up into a disinterest in these affaires. As much as these circumstances result in a global numbness they fuel a rebellion aiming to gain independence from this epiphany.

A figurative example of an individual reaction is a habit my father formed over the years. My father, a retired metalworker and interior craftsman, has always been interested in and was part of versatile technologic developments. He felt he could build and repair virtually anything. With his professional parting and the accompanied distance towards technological achievements in manufacturing he experiences a distinct reality. It was almost always cheaper to buy new than to repair or let something be repaired. In his surrounding area service providers died out or became unacceptably expensive. This let him change his attitude completely. Instead of buying expensive quality products which he didn’t trust any more because they also could not be repaired or improved he started to go for the discounted offerings. With electric tools bought in a local consumer hardware store he started to establish the hobby of using these products so intensively within their specifications that they failed eventually during the short warranty of a year. Because the products were already discontinued he got a full refund. The feeling to have tricked the unappreciated system raised a small smile on him. Personally amused by his invented karma of consumption I didn’t think his message could really reach the addressee considering how many mass produced commodities would have to be returned, rejected or complained about before market strategy changes.

My parents belongs to a generation where values were still associated with what someone explicitly could do, how effective someone was to carry out housekeeping, to build a house, lead a family, to supply for it. In this generation and the ones before reaching to the beginning of civilization the absolute value was purpose. Something was good because it fulfilled a purpose. Marriage in that sense was no difference, it is an institution based on love, yes, but also bound to commitment in terms of simple function. Our last generations continuously degrade these functions to the simple capability of supplying and to the elusive concept of love, a way of commercializing the institution itself—alimony and love without consequence. What we experience in our social life has its equality in our consumer life. A bond not defined by purpose but by commercial value and elusive attachment without responsibility. My father has little ac-

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<sup>6</sup> Walden Bello’s speech about economic globalization during McPlanet Conference in 2003

ceptance for design because all he links it to is elusive esthetic styling of a product with little values and an inappropriate price.

From values like the respect for property we can deviate concrete regulations for social behavior for example 'If you do something make it right' Values are a central component of multiple behavioral directives yet are values not behavioral directives themselves. From attractive values a society diverts restrictive norms. Norms have no direct commercial value.

Human values like distinctiveness, consistency and honesty have little place in global market but are used extensively to influence the decisions of the people. This matter is an important element people have to be made aware of. It becomes increasingly necessary for individuals to state a position in their consumer behavior to avoid detaching themselves emotionally from the world. An interesting example is the IBM ThinkPad and its incorporated identity in the process of being sold to the chinese LENOVO company. It shows how the importance of values become discriminated and is used alone to sell a product. IBM or International Business Machines is an american multinational technology and consulting company founded in 1911. The firms first president was Thomas J. Watson. His favorite slogan 'THINK' became a mantra for the employers establishing it as a recognizable credo over the following generations—a tradition was born. Over the years IBM managed to create products which were renowned for their reliability, quality, durability, and performance. In 1992, 71 years after laying the foundation IBM made their first notebook calling it ThinkPad still rooting it to their corporate history and culture. In 1995 IBM hired industrial designer Richard Sapper to give this series of new products a formal identity. Inspired by the esthetic appearance of japanese lunch boxes 'Bento' a complete single-portion home-packed meal he designed the complete take-out office. In 2005 Lenovo computer corporation buys IBM PC Company, takes over its whole corporate identity, thus suddenly changing an american product into a chinese product. The consumer still sees the unchanged recognizable design decorated by the 'THINK' in ThinkPad. Lenovo has bought this traditional appearance but didn't inherit it. It is now slowly changing into a mangle of products that cannot be differentiated, that lack thoughtfulness and continuity.

For human beings an important constant is continuity. Society relates to it with an abstract term: Tradition

The concept of traditions is deeply anchored in our value system. By passing on a ritual, belief or object we form the practical manifestations of our moral concepts. With the term people are able to relate to objects and behavioral patterns on an intuitive level. When a tradition in a society is established it has gained a collective bond. It takes generations to build them. They are not found or invented. Traditions often have a deep and complex heritage which goes beyond the comprehensibility of a single individual. We learn to honor important traditions in our childhood. How to dress, how to behave at the table, how to be moderate, how to address our family, friends and strangers. Traditions develop through the establishment of rituals or habits and are transmitted by the individuals through imitation, adaptation, and transformation. It may be that you handle a tool the same way your great great grandfather did it although you could never possibly have met him. Unconsciously such attributes are carried over from parent to child, from community member to community member. Traditions are of generational origin in the field of language, work and social life. These structures undergo a significant degradation because of a general de-personalization in our daily life. Peoples work is becoming less open, generally disconnected from social life and behind closed doors. Social life is fluctuating to say the least, it is also not necessarily connected to our immediate environment any more. All not the best requirements for the maintaining or development of traditions.

When we walk through the streets we may see shops selling products but not many



making them. Traditional bakeries are nearly extinct, shoemakers for sure, tailors are mostly gone, the list is endless. Before shops were solely the place to buy products they were also the place where products were manufactured: hats were made by hatters, shoes by shoemakers and umbrellas by umbrella makers and so on. It was a system of vibrant life. We lost this system of local service providers and workshops in favor of being able to have everything at any time. It left people with only a residue of former content.

## Part 2: Actions

### Chapter 4: My ambition and the umbrella as an actual example

What I want to achieve with my work is to give people an insight of what lies beneath the obvious in a product. Where does it come from, which background does it have and how does it work?

The umbrella is a prime example. Used in almost every country in the world, it is part of our life as a practical object as well as an esthetic entity with fashionable qualities. It became a main character in countless fictional works like Mary Poppins and the magical umbrella that takes you everywhere or in Gene Kelly's 'Singing in the rain'. The umbrella is associated with protection, freedom, beauty and individualism. We have optimized its construction in terms of strength, rigidity and economics within its history of roughly 400 years.

It seems like a perfect product with a long and undisputed history. For decades we have used the "modern" umbrella without questioning its design or heritage. Who would think of it as faulty? I do. Most of the distributed umbrellas are not meant to withstand more than one season. Its production is so economically efficient that over 70 percent can be sold for under 10 Euros making them cheap disposable products. This efficiency is not reached through improving machinery and automatization. It has gained its status by an economical process leading to 90 percent of all umbrellas being produced in the Far East and shipped throughout the world. Its production method never sustained an improvement other than cost reduction through mass production in low wage countries. Through this development umbrellas are constructed virtually indistinguishable from model to model, from company to company using a simple established design. They are build of various inexpensive materials, customized in color and shape for the seasonal style. Their construction and choice of materials make them non-durable disposable products unlikely to be repaired or properly disassembled for recycling. The resources lost in this process are immense considering the millions being produced within a single season. These products are assembled in a human labour intensive way because, despite their simplicity, a lot of individual operations have to be performed. Assembling a single umbrella takes approximately four hours. Numerous mass production laborers are taught to perform simple coordinated steps. To maintain a reliable assembly line the associated industries are forced to retain production procedures at all times and are obliged not to change these. This prevents the product to be developed further, improved or altered.

All globalized markets build on re-allocation and centralization to minimize operating expenses. Assembly lines in the Far East like ones for an umbrella are vast. The only thing they have in common with the traditional factories situated for instance in England

(Swaine Adeney Brigg), Italy (Malia) or Germany (Knirps) is the necessary manual labor. There is no personal pride attached to the product any more and no one responsible for it. The product became standardized:

Copied, downgraded, labeled, and handed to the distributor. Basically the same product can be offered in different markets wearing an adjusted cover, packaging or label. The tag showing 'Made in a country far, far away' is not an adornment, it is an entitlement not to care.

The elements surrounding the umbrella-industry can be found again in countless other products on the world market whether it is textiles, furniture, product housing, or product packaging, all displaying a formative element in our consumer life—homogeneity.

In the case of the umbrella we have a commodity which eludes itself from our comprehension in terms of how such an item could cost five euros and take an effort of some hours of manual work. In contrast to that traditionally manufactured umbrellas range from 40 to as much as 500 Euros. In case of the cheap competitor we would have expected it to be produced solely automated at this price not even considering the material costs. In my opinion a very sophisticated obfuscation occurs here. Whether deliberately or not the way commodities are produced takes advantage of how people are being spoiled by the claimed wonders of technology forwarded by the media.

Showing off sensational new achievements in automation, robot technology and cinematic effects people are blinded of how much human work is behind it. The television as well as the written media show how incredible automated assembly lines like those for cars or computer technology work. Fictional stories give us the feeling anything can be produced just with the help of a computer and a specialized machine. The longevity of commodities though doesn't improve. Instead the product life cycle decreases. Also the substantial value of products after the initial purchase decreases continuously.

I want to help avoid these circumstances whether it is a matter of comestibles or commodities. I center my work on how I can operate as a designer using alternative structures parallel to the controlling body of globalized markets.

It is my position that products can be produced economically efficient in a region where the products are actually being used. By repairing, changing and updating products through a cultural dialogue within a region we give those objects the chance of being part of our traditional life again. The gain behind it is on one side that people do not have to take things for granted being able to call for responsibility. On the other side people are able to appreciate valuable products of their region and are able to pass on this impression.

## Chapter 5: The reason why

The concept of transforming ideologies into dream societies has left us with disastrous social and political outcomes: imperialism, colonization, national socialism, socialism and at last capitalism. Every ideology has and had the wish to include global aspects thus creating a form of globalization.

What I take out of this is that globalization refers to an effect and not a cause. Globalization can't be blamed or held responsible for showing us what its face looks like. Everyone needs to understand this, I needed to understand this. If we want to refer to the good or the bad in the face of globalization we have to talk about harmonic and counter-harmonic relations in the common realm and if we want to discuss global equality we necessarily have to search for indicators of saturation and spareness. I wanted to deci-

pher the word because I needed to point out its demagogic character and its populist appearance. Paraphrasing instances as a result of globalization is just not good enough. Along with our already narrowed powers of comprehension we are in a period where we are knocked down by worldwide economic breakdowns and are upheaved again by their peak levels which reveal themselves only through a statistical prognosis created by financial institutions. Ian Goldin director at the university of Oxford and former director of development policy and vice president of the World Bank 2001-2006 sees the future as we know as very unpredictable. He orates amongst other venues at the James Martin 21st century school and at TED talks in 2009. He emphasizes that foreseeing the future the best minds in the best institutions with the best evaluation systems generally get it wrong, whether it is in technology, politics, finance or any other branch, quoting chairman Thomas Watson of IBM in 1958 'I think there is a world market for maybe five computers'.

My opinion is that we have to accept the fact that "what can be done will be done" in terms of that an existing system like the globalized market will always try to maintain its strategy sustaining its growth rate through continuous output. If individuals feel the need to go a different direction they have to do that consciously through their personal commitment. An important issue is that people have a limited threshold in ways that exceed their general knowledge. The state of no transparency impairs this issue further. In addition established ideologies or straight rules abandon the concept of reflection, the fundamental element in the comprehension of the correlation of this globalized affaires.

As long as the basic needs people have are fulfilled—that can be as simple as food and shelter or as elaborate as pleasure and amusement—people are able to be kept out of the loop of decisions. The fulfillment of needs then is equated with happiness.

Happiness, that is what its all about, as hippy as that may sound. The thing is that constant happiness is connected to constant diversification. People just can not stand to see, to taste, to experience something over and over again. It makes them get bored, the last and most luxurious form of unhappiness.

The global market approach is to create more, better and more divers solutions against this habit of people getting bored. The problem is that the global market does so with only one solution—continuous output—the offering of products with or without content, mostly without.

Comestibles and commodities first came of exotic then of estranged origins. In the entrainment the market tries to cope with the lack of content or diversity by making everything fantastic. Movies are dominated by special effects deviating from the poor story, products get a shinier housing or styling than the swiftly dulling ones from last year. We are in age of features. The more features the better because products have to address a greater audience. In this flood of reference values it is not important any more which features are important and which are not, totality counts. We can see that for example in entertainment electronics and computer industry. Television channel count, screen size, resolution, capacity, processing speed. Hardly established high definition television is already in discussion to be replaced by quadruple high definition rendering the previous standard obsolete. Development and distribution of new generations optical data storage is in progress although it is most likely not a long lasting approach. There are far more flexible ways of data distribution over the internet. The CD died out the DVD is almost gone and Blu-ray more than unnecessary. The reason why such technology is brought on the market is control. When buying specific hardware whether it is a TV, a video-player, or a computer you are bound to its qualifications. When a video player or a TV does not support high definition you have to buy a new one, when a PC is not capable to process your media you have to buy a new one. These are calculated elements in global marketing. The problem marketing is facing at the moment is that people start to realize that any technology is a form of a computing entity. It is already possible to just have a PC-computer with the abilities to also be your game console,



your video player and TV and your telephone. The computing power of a recent smart phone would be able to satisfy a majority of people with its capabilities given that you were able to attach it to a keyboard and a bigger screen.

I see that people do realize the deeper content in things although a single individual might only be able to say that all products are of crappy quality, are useless or that he or she is just not happy or bored by everything. Boredom then also has something good, something prolific in it. It may not seem to be the case—being told from childhood on that it is one's own fault—it's kind of a pain but is the first form of rejection. People are asking themselves why they are bored.

People are bored because there are no relevant influences in their environment. They are bored because nothing interests them any more. People are realizing that when leaving their doorstep nothing vital is happening in their vicinity. Everything is related to the consumption of what gives amusement and pleasure and that has no real purpose. Our capitalized society gives us a clear picture of how it interprets life: work is what you are paid for, living is what you have to pay for. This ethical distinction has also become a perceptual one creating a slow but accelerative forming spacial gap over the last two centuries moving production facilities first from the gathering ground of urban areas to their outskirts and then slowly further till they reached the low wage countries of the Far East.

My generation grew up without knowing an alternative, not recognizing its impact. What we recognize is that nobody knows any more how to make something, to repair something, or to improve something. Our society was built on a system of service providers and manufacturers. It gave us purpose. Personally I want to see that again and I believe it can be achieved.

## Chapter 6: How to make it happen

It is clear that I am not pursuing to reinvent the wheel. Society has got all the organs necessary to maintain its stability. It is a matter of organization, transparency and self-sufficiency. While working on gathering opinions and facts to set them into a coherent context I came across a passage in David S. Landes book 'The Wealth and Poverty of Nations'. Landes is an economy historian of Harvard University and teacher. In his book he describes a five point list that when followed would lay the building blocks of a society with ideal growth and development index. He states if a society:

first, "knew how to operate, manage, and build the instruments of production and to create, adapt, and master new techniques on the technological frontier"

second, "had the ability to impart this knowledge and know-how to the young whether by formal education or apprenticeship training"

third, "may choose people for jobs by competence and relative merit; promoted and demoted on the basis of performance"

fourth, "affords opportunity to individual or collective enterprise; encourages initiative, competition, and emulation"

fifth, "allows people to enjoy and employ the fruits of their labor and enterprise"

it would create a flourishing and healthy basis “given the corollaries: gender equality (doubling the pool of talent); no discrimination on the basis of irrelevant criteria (race, sex, religion, etc.); also a preference for scientific (means-end) rationality over magic and superstition (irrationality)”. Landes goes further and lists the political and social institutions that would favor the achievement of these larger goals. As he proceeds he mentioned an intriguing fact that was the underlying reason for me to write over this subject:

“No society on earth has ever matched this ideal”

I am not a historian, nor a politician, and also not an economist. What I do and will do is officiating a role in our society. As a designer I will influence others with objects I make, lifestyles I spread and systems I develop and introduce. To do that, according to a manifest that resembles my understanding of how a society should function, will let me not only guarantee my income but will also help to improve life. People will realize that it can be significantly easier to gain goals, harvest and enjoy their fruits if working exclusively for a society they can grasp.

“Think Globally, Act Locally” is an old saying that is used in a lot of contexts. Starting with town planning leading over environment protection and business development. It is understood to be a crucial guideline in developing, maintaining and protecting infrastructures in these fields. I can add two more fields which managed to exclude themselves quite too long: economy and industry.

According to “Think Globally, Act Locally” we have to work in the smallest structure to influence the biggest. When taking the industry as an example and applying the guideline for developing, maintaining and protecting this particular infrastructure what are we getting out? — The result would be local micro-industries which functions similar to biodynamic agriculture. This industry aims as much as it can to be self-sufficient leading to the use and reuse of local resources in a direct exchange. This certainly is only viable if this kind of industry is simple enough to economically support its multiplication over a greater or even global area. Not every kind of industry could achieve that, however I presume there are many which could. With the umbrella I want to prove such an approach. Advancements in manufacturing technologies will increase further possibilities. The moment the industry goes local we can be sure the economy follows creating a direct exchange of currency, goods and services. The togetherness of production and selling and with it adaptation and improvement can be established again. Through such modern workshops people would gain access to facilities that equal the classic manufacturing people had a traditional connection to. A physical connection to and the knowing about the modern workshops will help society to understand and to appreciate the products created there. A main character of these new workshops would be the adaptability and ability to be founded at any place, city, area, and country of the world, that provides the demand.

The new age is the age of entrepreneurs. Like in times when there were shoemakers, hatters and umbrella makers we live in a time where simple ideas and specialized branches count again.

I interpret society as the outcome of how we grow up. Playing and learning as the predecessors of living and working are now happening in the dynamics of networks. Not long ago society was built on people’s individual repertoire of knowledge and skills, very specialized and unique. What you do was what you knew and society backed you up by supplying a niche for you. It was not seldom to work for a single company your whole live. People lived and worked local.

We are now in a time where education isn’t only happening in schools but also through autodidactic ways forwarded by the internet. We experience multiple strategies now. People change their jobs and orientation frequently whether it is through occupational

re-training or because their background gives them more room. We have a lot more self-employed people who publish themselves over the internet. As the concept of living and working changes the old systems lack substance and have to be exchanged for new ones. One of those things are office structures, buildings built for being offices and interiors designed to stay for decades, the same applies to workshops. Startup companies of our times are often small and have individual but little needs. "Co-working Spaces" are able to offer these. They are able to give individuals room and an infrastructure in a very flexible way. Peoples needs are met with supplying a general infrastructure but also anticipating that professional and personal demands change or grow. While I was working for the co-working place Betahaus and the Open Design City in Berlin I experienced it as a possible substitute for the big societies and families we used to live in. A place like Betahaus offers the analogue counterpart to the conglomerate of digital networks forwarded by the internet. In other urban centers like Fablabs and open workshops people also develop new ways of carrying out commerce. The moment production capability is added to this evolving systems we can be sure to established an alternative for the globalized market and its processing.

A quality of such local infrastructures is that compared to their international counterparts transparency is appreciated and information flow much more vibrant by nature. People's will to give notice is as strong as the wish to get noted. I find it imperative to strengthen these networks and to offer people concrete examples of what is possible with ones own resources.

An important element that these places of urban networking incorporate is the philosophy of open sourcing. It is the idea that the means of creation should be accessible for everyone. The ideology behind is to encourage individuals to share their tools, machines and know-how. Besides gaining enough benefits to secure the enabling of enough proceeds to build an infrastructure and to develop it further the concept behind is non-profit Individuals within the infrastructure are able to offer services and to take services.

I believe when expanded, organized and interconnected these urban places of production and service provision could match the ideal I constructed from the impressions I got and the opinions I scrutinized.

David S. Landes had the society of countries in mind when formulating his ideal. Since what a society defines is not measurement but relation it can be downscaled to any state were it is self sufficient, a country, a state, a town and lastly a commune.

## Conclusion

As a designer I am not about to create or design products only to have them produced and thrown onto the market. I want to see the products I help to develop and market to be viable in a society. They have to be independent from the global market thus can be produced and maintained within any scale: commune, town, state and country.

To enable this form of design strategy on a broad scale the following points have to be considered:

### Creating a dialogue between people and products

Products have to have the quality of being sane interpretations of peoples needs. This includes how and where these products are produced. Showing how things work and how they are produced is a central element of a design. Products have to be developed in ways that design and production are in a constant dialogue. People have to be able to follow this dialogue on their own terms, on an intuitive basis through their own observation or research.

### Rising curiosity toward products

A product concept should stimulate curiosity of how it is made. Curiosity is the will for understanding conceptional interrelations. Today a lot of products lack this transparent character thus they are not able to evoke this curiosity. The understanding about how a product can be made, repaired, upgraded or reused and at last recycled gives a creative power to the consumer. This is serving the rising group of considerable consumers who take care and like to learn about the backside story of their products: where does it come from? Who made it? Is it produced ethically and environmentally sound?

### Relocating of manufacturing processes into local environments

A shop is a place to buy products. In former times it was also the place where these products were manufactured: hats were made by hatters, shoes by shoemakers and umbrellas by umbrella makers. With the advancements in production techniques like computer aided manufacturing, automation and replicability of facilities the togetherness of production and selling can be established again. Through such modern workshops people would gain access to facilities that equal the classic manufactories people had a traditional connection to. A physical connection to and the knowing about the modern workshops will help society to understand and to appreciate the products created there. A main character of these new workshops is the adaptability and ability to be founded at any place, city, area, and country of the world, that provides the demand.

### Finding the social connection

We need to find a substitute for the big societies and families we used to live in. The basic infrastructures are already offered to us. Through the conglomerate of digital networks forwarded by the internet and communicative place in urban centers like co-working places, fablabs and open workshops people already develop new ways of car-

rying out commerce. Maybe here even lies the foundation of future traditions. People's will to give notice is as strong as the wish to get noted. It is imperative to strengthen these networks and to offer people concrete examples of what is possible.

If we meet these ideals a new generation of industrial manufacturing will arise.

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