

**The affective  
sustainability of objects;  
a search for causal  
connections.**

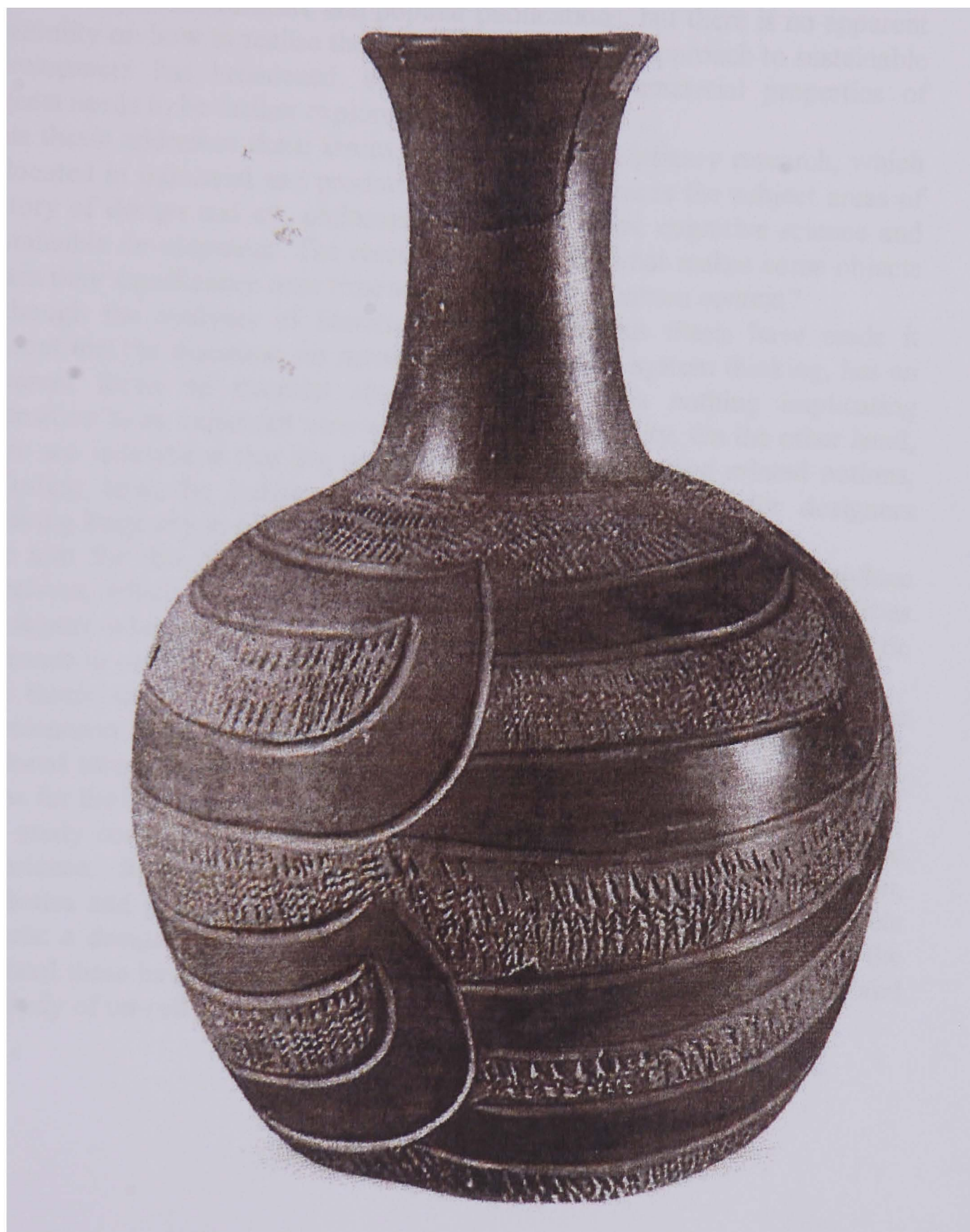
**Studies of theory, processes and  
practice related to timelessness as a  
phenomenon.**

PhD-thesis

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Botella estilo Ofrendas. Chavín. / *Ofrendas style bottle. Chavín. MAASM.*

**Peru, Formation period ca 100 b.c.**

## Abstract

The phenomenon of timelessness has important connotations beyond its popular meaning. Although philosophical, timelessness is frequently applied to objects: there are various suggestions concerning the properties of a timeless object in literature and popular publications, but there is no apparent unanimity on how to realise these characteristics. The approach to sustainable development has broadened, but the impact of immaterial properties of objects needs to be further explored.

This thesis addresses these issues through cross-disciplinary research, which is located in industrial and product design and embraces the subject areas of history of design and art, philosophy, cultural studies, cognitive science and sustainable development. The research question is: what makes some objects retain their significance over time and in a changing human context?

Although the analyses of literature presented in this thesis have made it evident that the discourse on sustainability, including system thinking, has an apparent focus on material characteristics, there is nothing implicating opposition to an expanded view comprising immateriality. On the other hand, there are indications that the ambiguity of timelessness and related notions, including how the judgment is formed, causes confusion for designers pursuing longevity in objects.

The aim for this thesis is hence to address this ambiguity and introduce directions, which would allow designers to consider the immaterial qualities of objects when designing and thereby promote a more profound holistic approach to sustainability and sustainable design.

The thesis embarks on a deconstruction of timelessness, resulting in the phenomenon being conceptualised: affective sustainability, and subsequently explored through three applications. These initiate new lines of inquiry and allow for the thesis to conclude the key findings of the research.

The study concludes that affective sustainability is considered to be a lived experience. Re-considering sustainability and rethinking time, tradition, aesthetics and perception facilitate comprehension of affectively sustainable objects: a designer has to use intuitive judgements and to reach beyond the personal these have to be balanced by the verbal visualisation of thoughts and the study of un-reflected human behaviour outside laboratory settings.

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## Prologue

### From timelessness to affective sustainability

Very early on when my interest in design was not professional, I was fascinated by objects and buildings, which seemed to have some kind of eternal appeal.

Why then this fascination?

Unlike many young people I was never fixated with *the new* or the latest version of everything but neither did I have an interest in old things as such. Everything that worked aesthetically and functionally appeared very appealing, *regardless of age*. I was in effect a very early devotee of eclecticism, which to me was exactly that: combining designs to create a functioning whole, with all aspects taken into consideration. Periods or eras were not relevant. Later I learnt about eclecticism as a contemporary trend, which risked being dismissed as merely a passing fashion. I probably interpreted eclecticism wrongly from the outset. Commonly defined as a juxtaposition of styles, for me it was about combining existing forms in a new, hopefully purposeful, way. According to John Dewey, who I will return to in detail in my work, this is what art and design is all about. It is not about creating new forms, even if this is what many designers often are occupied with – or believe they are occupied with.

When my interest in design eventually started to take a professional turn<sup>1</sup>, this idea of objects, which could be related to any time, [even if apparently originating from a certain time] appeared very important, not least because of the enormous resources to be saved by making use of the experience involved. However, I could not find an answer to the question why some objects seemed ‘contemporary with every other age’<sup>2</sup>, those we habitually and without deeper reflection call: *Timeless*. Is it about lucky circumstances, factors converging in the right object in the right time? Do certain historical periods influence us more than others and do objects dating from these periods therefore have a stronger and more sustainable presence? Maybe, it is mainly about smart design solutions: objects stripped down to bare essentials? Could *timelessness* in fact be a marketing gimmick or alternatively the making of designs historians?

It proved impossible to find any coherent pattern among these possible factors or explanations. The only way forward appeared to be some kind of dissection of the denomination timelessness. My interest had turned academic.

The notions of the timeless and timelessness were thus already very much in focus during the initial process leading to concretisation of the subject area for my thesis. First enthusiasm eventually met reality. The ambiguity of the timeless became evident, not least through a question I posed on the PhD-Design mailing list (Timeless? 2002). If at all concrete, the timeless was referred to as a phenomenon with philosophical implications. I realised that the research underpinning my thesis would at least initially be something of a *quest*, but would it be worthwhile? Accounting not only for my motives, but also making a careful analysis of the aim was imperative. Even if your motives are strong, it is by carefully analysing your aim that you really get perspective and become aware of

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<sup>1</sup> As marketing professional, I developed over the years a niche competence in the role of design in communication.

<sup>2</sup> Paraphrasing Gadamer’s expression (Osborne, 1995)

whether there is a true purpose for the work you are about to start. Is the path you are taking likely to lead to improvements, either on a theoretical or a practical level? Or are you merely pursuing a personal line of enquiry?

Two important *moments of truth* offered the motives to continue.

i) The realisation that most objects are not discarded because they are worn out or no longer function physically. They might not even be technically obsolete or even physically irrelevant for a changing context. They are turned into waste for a number of other reasons, which seem to concern more mental irrelevance: we do not like them any more, we have in fact never liked them, we do not see any meaning in having them around, they do not contribute in any way. We think that we have found something better to replace them. Sometimes we simply explain our action with something being out of fashion. Is this the way we are, or are the main reasons to be found in the economic system, which is ruling western societies? Is this the way it has to be, we want it to be? Is there in fact a self-regulatory balance built into this system, which we should not intervene in? Is there knowledge to be found in various disciplines, which might be relevant and which might advise on how to arrive at another balance of benefit for the development of a sustainable society<sup>3</sup> and hence the economic system?

ii) The identification of a distinct pattern when researching a number of relevant disciplines: there is an overwhelming focus on *human ways of living* and methods to influence or change these. Are changes predictable and thus allowing futurism? Does this focus resulting from a general belief in *the reflecting, rational human*, controlling his or her actions? Might it be *the un-reflected response* indicating some kind of separation of body and mind? Are *human ways of being* normally recognised as giving rise merely to lower order actions? Is there enough evidence for a change of focus, or rather a widening, based on *how human ways of being and living interact*? Would rethinking on this level contribute to the understanding of the timeless?

It came as no surprise that there is very limited work done in this area of research. However, I was not prepared for the complexity of the subject. The initial quest to define my subject area has proven its importance and has become an integrated part of my core work. Advancing from an early interest in timelessness to a true understanding has required much time and effort. It has brought me from the initial idea to a fairly mature concept and has involved much re-thinking. The current habitual use of words like timeless, classic, eternal and so on as synonyms and without discrimination, in popular as well as academic context, has been very confusing. Considering that these words moreover are used un-knowingly, the patterns I have been trying to extract have been almost continuously distorted. Setting boundaries for the area of my research has been another part of the quest. The subject is abstract enough to risk spreading into an unmanageable number of disciplines. There are relationships, which have highly variable connotations although others are well defined.

As a result of the quest *timelessness became obsolete* and was replaced by *affective sustainability*. This change is conceptual and indicates where the quest led me: sustainability is a holistic concept, which needs to be further developed.

My hope is that already the denomination will start an imaginative process in the reader, which will then make my work more accessible. Willingness to rethink and an open mind are preconditions for all new understanding.

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<sup>3</sup> I will present my understanding of sustainability and 'the Sustainment' in chapter I, Introduction.

## **Part One: Presentation of research**

# Chapter I. Introduction

## 1. The research question and its audience<sup>4</sup>.

*What makes some objects retain their significance over time and in changing human contexts?*

Objects retaining their significance independent of time and context are most often referred to as *timeless* and this research project aims to follow two vital lines of inquiry:

1. *Can knowledge on how to make an object retain its significance over time in a changing human context be accessed and applied?*
2. *Will this knowledge eventually contribute to an improved and more holistic view on sustainability?*

Answers will be presented as *directions*, indicating a way to go, and not as truths, indicating the only way to go.

The research is a theoretical analysis where a number of applications are made only to allow for the analysis to deepen. The research aim places the work within design criticism and the intended readership is firstly design professionals: educators and researchers. Secondly, the thesis ought to be a useful reference for postgraduate students. The language applied throughout the thesis is tuned in at this readership. The directions, referred to above, will in a next step<sup>5</sup> be developed into a *Handbook* where the intended readership is practicing designers.

The line of inquiry follows objects in a wide sense, which includes buildings as architectural objects. Relevance for the subject rather than preset boundaries is guiding the inquiry, although graphic design and fashion design are not part of the analyses for well-founded reasons expressed later in this chapter.

## 2. The research aim

Is it possible or even desirable to try to arrive at a single vision of timelessness? Mies van der Rohe's single vision of architecture resulted in very few of his houses being built (Padovan, 2002). Presenting an objective view of any phenomenon would according to Michl (1990-91) be a theoretical construct. He argues that objectivity is as difficult to achieve as perfection. This issue will be addressed later in this work with further reference to Michl and the Bauhaus, which is the focus of his critique what regards claims for perfection.

The aim is, in the first place, to raise awareness and enhance the understanding of the phenomenon: *to create a platform*, and secondly to inform on possible ways to consider timelessness in designing: *to give directions*. This includes not only adding usable knowledge to the design process but also

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<sup>4</sup> To facilitate the reading of this work, special terms and expressions used throughout are explained in Appendix F, pp. 224-225

<sup>5</sup> Not included in this thesis.



suggesting new directions within design discourse, which is where the above-mentioned *Handbook* will play a crucial role.

Timeless has according to Osborne (1995) mainly philosophical implications from a formal language point of view and an early but important way into a research area within something as physical as design has thus been philosophical. It has consequently been of major importance to start the research with a very well defined aim to be able to find the way through demanding philosophical issues. Even if this research in a way is virgin, it is not meant to be basic in the meaning of not being in the reach of practical application, as is illustrated by the intended *Handbook*, without adding to the flora of existing theoretical models and methods for design [process] and claiming to be scientific, it is aimed at being an addition to design theory and thus an enlargement of knowledge and a contribution to consciousness raising among designers regarding how to think about the ability to design timeless objects, designs that last beyond their physical capacity and outlast generations and often also transcend family and national borders, sometimes even cultural borders. Kwinter (2002) introduces the notion of 'affective capacity' on the human level to describe objects, which thus appear to be part of a flow. He uses the metaphor of snow-crystals to illustrate how these, as opposed to ice-cubes, can take on any form as they are allowed 'free growth'. When water is poured in a form, like the ice-cube, its growth is hampered and its form predestined.

Inherent in the aim, as expressed above, is an improvement of the *balance between innovation and development respectively innovation and the creation of the new*. Important questions to be answered concern: Does a *new* [design] always imply development? How is design for the future linked to innovation: is there an emphasis on development or the new? There are signs that designers find the notion of *futuristic design* ambiguous, which also influence how they relate to traditions: are these a precondition or an obstacle when trying to extrapolate the future? Negus & Pickering argues it is 'a common misconception to regard innovation and tradition as diametrically opposed to each other.' (2004, p. 91.)

This research is not like most, a continuation of existing threads but a search for threads, which might form a pattern. It embraces moreover a multitude of disciplines: philosophy, sociology including cultural studies and communication theory, cognitive science, art history, design and architecture including their history, theory and practice, to mention the most important. Finally it is very theoretical in nature, even partly philosophical as mentioned above, but even so aims at giving directions for practice. Together this poses a considerable challenge when choosing appropriate research methods.

### 3. Sustainability decoded.

Tony Fry (2003 a) argues in the first issue, which inaugurates the online journal Design Philosophy Papers, that 'the rhetoric of sustainability has little in common with the idea of "the Sustainment"' (p. 1). The term sustain comes from the Latin word 'sustinere', which means 'to hold up' and as part of the notion of sustainability the dictionary meanings of 'nourish' respectively 'keep up', 'prolong' appears to be the most appropriate<sup>6</sup>. The inclusion of 'nourish' is appropriate if we, like Fry, define sustainability as actions to secure the future of

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<sup>6</sup> Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, [www.britannica.com/dictionary](http://www.britannica.com/dictionary)

our not only being in the world but our future *well-being*. This latter is very central to Fry as it differentiates between what is worth sustaining and what is not. To sustain the unsustainable; that which when measured in terms of securing human well-being is not contributing to what he calls ‘the Sustainment’ (p. 2), might according to him be the effect if we pursue the current ‘techno-functionalist way of viewing the world’ (p. 1). He questions the reduction of sustainability to ‘biophysical and instrumental mechanisms’ and continues to ask for ‘cultural practices, values, habits and thinking’ to be considered (2003 b, p. 2). Fry does not mention affection, spirituality or even emotion among the variables, which if considered would also add to a less scientific and technical definition of the ‘system dysfunction’, which is contributing to un-sustainability or, in Fry’s terminology, ‘defuturing’ (1999).

In another issue of the same journal, Willis (2006) brings to the fore the idea of ‘ontological design’, which according to her has not been sufficiently addressed in the discourse of sustainability. As ontology is the theory about the nature of being<sup>7</sup>, the foundation for ontological design can be referred partly to Heidegger and his work on *Being* and to his interest in technological issues often expressed through a discussion of *equipment*. A room and not only a thing or an object is considered to be equipment for residing and moreover, equipped for the function to be carried out in that room. Equipment does here not necessarily mean something techno-functional, as Le Corbusier and his ‘a house as a machine for living’ (p. 3), but would also refer to the mind. Heidegger makes this very clear in later works, where he argues that to build is not, as commonly understood, ‘the activity of construction’ (p. 4) but in original old English and German grammar, to dwell and also to preserve and care for. The idea of how our *dwelling*s are central to our well-being and mental state is also the principal subject when Alain de Botton (2006) writes about the ‘Architecture of Happiness’: Le Corbusier’s *Villa Savoye* was perhaps a beautiful ‘machine for living’ but not a dwelling and only the second world-war let him escape a legal process initiated by the owners. De Botton continues to argue that though there is overwhelming evidence that architecture has a defining and profound impact on our lives and the way we feel architecture is primarily technologically driven.

*Thus sustainability should thus not be reduced to the idea of sustaining but mean contribution to improved and continued human well-being, making no distinction between body and mind. This definition is also guiding this research.*

#### 4. Overview with reference to methods, aims and definitions.

The first part of the research explores and analyses the phenomenon of the *timeless* and the notion of timelessness plus all their abbreviations and maps them further in three dimensions: material, cognitive and cultural in three perspectives: physical, philosophical and affective. The importance of doing the mapping grew out of the initial exploration of the timeless, the quest, which has enabled continued research. Exploring, analysing and mapping is best described as *deconstructing timeless* with the aim of arriving at a grounded theory about its properties and of extracting the conceptual categories necessary for continued study of the phenomenon. Finalising the first part is a *reconstruction of the*

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<sup>7</sup> Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, [www.britannica.com/dictionary](http://www.britannica.com/dictionary)

*timeless*, which gives reason to believe that *the affective* and *the sustainable* is likely to best embrace the complexity involved in the timeless and simultaneously facilitate communication: having the capacity of being a reminder, which will start certain processes in the mind of designers.

Before continuing, it is essential to emphasise that the aim of this research never was to arrive at a new denomination. The overall aim is to search for causal connections, which may explain why some objects retain their significance over time and in a changing human context and others do not. An easier way to proceed would probably have been to concentrate on a description within the realm of *how designers could develop their thinking in new directions* and present the different variables with possible causal connections. As the number of necessary disciplines to explore the timeless increased over the course of the deconstruction so did the complexity. It became obvious that there was a need to compress and also to manifest progression: the timeless had become demystified and conceptualised in *affective sustainability*.

Handling a formerly unknown concept means a complication from a research point of view as timeless is a very established, if poorly understood, *phenomenon*, which will continue to exert influence in various contexts. The integration of *how to make an object retain its significance in a changing human context* in the concept of sustainable design will be facilitated by the new denomination on the other hand. This issue has not been totally neglected over the years but its place on the agenda has been, and still is, a sideline. In the more developed part of the world, the interest in sustainability has in a very few years risen to the point whereby companies feel obliged to report on their contributions in the annual review while the term remains ambiguous. These official reports often take the form of facts and figures, which sit well in this and other documents aimed at investors and politicians, but rarely considers issues, which fall outside the scientific and technological or even mentions in what way an action or a new product is contributing to sustainability. Among the important questions which ought to be posed are whether an action is symptom-focused or cause-focused (Chapman 2005) or if a new product is contributing to sustainability as it for example eliminates several other products or is it, although *green*, merely another addition to the overabundance (Fry 2003 c). If these matters are considered within the companies, they are easy to report. It is more difficult to quantify the less explicit elements of sustainability, often referred to as emotional or spiritual also by scholars (for example Papanek, 1995, Norman, 2004, Chapman 2005). This impression of something tacit and abstract constitutes an obstacle to the expansion of sustainability into a holistic concept. Moreover, emotions and spirit are regarded as mainly individualistic expressions, which are not obvious to account for in designing. Chapman (2005) therefore argues about the risk that designers exaggerate in an effort to arouse emotional response with a product. This being so, an important claim, or rather reminder, in this work is *the crucial differentiation between affective and emotional*.

Affective sustainability is not only a direct reference but well conceptualised it is importantly more precise and concrete and founded on the difference between *human ways of being* and *human ways of living*. There appears to be confusion on the level of what is given to humans and what they learn over the course of their life. This confusion might date back to Heidegger who obviously regards them as coupled together and inseparable in '*Being*' only to later write '*the History of Being*'. '*Being*' goes beyond Being. McNeill (2003)

explains that even if Being is determined by the first beginning, 'Beyng' is present, though concealed it initiates another beginning. This reasoning is not without complications, not least from a terminology point of view. Moreover, as is discussed in several contexts in this work, efforts to actively change human ways of living are often made in vain as these are poorly differentiated from ways of being, which have to be exploited rather than changed. As is discussed in length in chapter III, our anthropocentric ways of living are generally judged as an important obstacle to sustainable development, here only to mention the ongoing debate in Design Philosophy Papers, for example in papers by Manzini and Jegou, (2003). However, this work will claim that anthropocentrism is a human precondition [for surviving], which has to be acknowledged and worked with [as opposed to against] to achieve sustainable development, where regard to the affective has to be enhanced.

The relevance of affective sustainability from a communication point of view is assessed through applications in part three. These are further elaborated to focus more precisely on *affective* referring to un-reflected or unconscious reactions and actions. The level of consciousness on which it operates decides whether affective sustainability is to be called a *lived or a learned experience*. These applications indicate strongly that affective sustainability is a lived experience but with learned experiences constantly interfering and causing confusion. Designers apparently have difficulties balancing their intuition with learned knowledge, which confirm that the aim of producing directions for practice is important. Using the conceptual categories resulting from the deconstructions as search tools in the applications helps to identify vital elements in designer thinking in the further pursuit of defining and formulating these directions in part four and five.

#### 4. Affective Sustainability and the real world

Almost omnipresent where design is involved are expressed intentions to design or produce objects with a long life, often paraphrased as *last for generations* or *with staying power*. Either designers, manufacturing companies or both are making these statements although there in a market economy are strategies for manufacture and design, which are directly counteracting the longevity of products, which will be further addressed below. The point to make is that this product characteristic is paraphrased more or less habitually but with no further explanation of how to achieve it. Interviews with a number of designers for a previous master thesis<sup>8</sup>, gave an impressive number of references to inspirational objects, which have been with us for a very long time, one interesting example being the London tube map: an everyday object, which illustrates what adaptability over time can be about. Emphasising the importance of sustainable design might be done out of correctness but there is reason to believe that many designers are sincere: Victor Papanek's book, 'Design for the real world', was a wake up call for many, when it was published in 1971. His belief that responsible design was one important way to come to terms with a wasteful society is too well known to need any further analysis here. Few designers would deny their professional social responsibility, even if individually assigning it varying weight.

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<sup>8</sup> Designers – interpreters of culture, producers of meaning? (Kristina Borjesson, Goldsmiths College, Department of Sociology, 2000)

How designers actually define *long life at the level of objects*, the importance they assign to it and how they approach it in their designs is for this research to find out as also if fashion is understood as the antithesis to timelessness.

The design of everyday objects is guided to a large extent by fashion and style, and these objects are consequently merely ‘occasional’ in contrast to buildings, which are to last for centuries argues Lavelid (2003) in a debate on modern architecture. It is not apparent whether he regards this situation as inevitable or even acceptable, in which case there are reasons to question his view. A plain distinction ought to be made between the physical and the affective as judged by the overall purpose. From what we know, many objects have on the affective – and sometimes also physical – level, lasted as long as buildings: several examples are to be found among furniture. The overall costs involved in the design and production of objects as opposed to buildings might make longevity, both physical and affective, seem more important for the latter but considering the enormous amount of objects produced, it is not realistic to assume that we can afford a general wasteful attitude towards product design, with a cultural, sociological and economic agenda separate from that of architecture<sup>9</sup>. All aspects must be considered and priorities made with careful discrimination for the creation a sustainable environment. Timelessness could be viewed as linked to a continuum representing quality of fabrication and where monuments represent the high end, graphics the low end and buildings, objects and clothes are placed in between.

Before describing the main phases of this research: deconstruction, application and analyses, there are a number of considerations to be made, which lifts affective sustainability into the real world. These considerations are made with the intention to define the research milieu but not to limit it. They will moreover be used as points of reference for the dimensions and perspectives, which are applied in the deconstruction process.

#### 4:1 Sustainability and the capitalistic system

The discourse on sustainability seems, even if sometimes innocently, ‘to quantify materiality rather than celebrating a temporal experience of Being’, to quote Wood (1997, p. 5)

‘The contemporary economic system does not encourage longevity in designed artefacts. Indeed, if the products of design did have significantly longer in-service life spans, the very fabric of our consumer society would be placed in jeopardy. ....our economies have become reliant on short life span consumer goods.’

This second quote (Hill 2003, p. 44) indicates that adding another dimension to sustainable development is doomed from the start as our economic system has an inbuilt contradiction to this. Hill continues to argue: ‘It is not because we are committed to a particular economic ideology that we desire *the new* even if it is upon *the new* our market economy depends.’ (p. 44) A fair interpretation would be that humans for some reason are predestined to desire the new. Forty (1986) writes that ‘design is one activity that capitalism has caused to flourish’ (p. 91). Even if historians according to him has tried to explain the

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<sup>9</sup> A useful comment in the debate concerned politics: architecture has a very special status as it creates the scene where it all takes place.



increasing production of varieties of objects, they have taken diversity for granted, constantly overlooking the human tendency to state individuality through possessions and instead referred to the evolution of new needs and to designer's desire to express their talent. Forty continues to be very categorical and quite rigid concerning *new needs*, which is surprising considering Maslow's 1970 revision of his need pyramid, adding Esteem and Self-actualisation (1954/1970). Furthermore, Forty questions Sigfried Giedeon's claims that many new designs 'must be derived from the discovery of new uses' (p. 92). He exemplifies with Giedion's 'proliferation of the designs of adjustable chairs' and reminds us that sitting was invented very long ago and cannot be re-invented and further claims that 'there seems to be no reason to believe that nineteenth –century designers were more inventive than people of other times' (p. 93). These statements are astonishing, not least considering how acknowledging the impact of bodily stature on back and related problems has influenced for example the design of office chairs and, moreover, the ongoing advances in ergonomics. The discussion of basic needs continues in chapter III.

Is our desire for the new inspiring development and innovation or is it the other way round? The opinion that we see a lot of new technology for the sake of it is widely spread (Datschefski, 2001, Fry 2003 a and b, Hill, 2003, Phillips, 2003, Chapman 2005). Designers are merely there to make it user friendly. Is it thus part of *human ways of being* to desire the new and in that case why?

Hill argues referring to Heidegger, that newness is less a fascination than a pursuit for 'care' and well-being. Hill is talking here in terms of 'care' as physical support, whilst mentioning that Heidegger's complex concept concerns all types of human understanding. This interpretation of Heidegger is in accordance with Willis (2006) analysis of Heidegger's impact on the understanding of ontological design. Well-being is apparently a very basic human need and *care* works consequently on the affective level. We want to feel comfortable and content with an object, and it is reasonable to believe that when these feelings are in place there is less desire to replace this object with a new one satisfying the same need. The desire might instead turn to another need that should be better cared for and where the new could mean improvement. *Well-being* is of course not only a basic human need but also socially and culturally determined (Maslow, 1970). According to among others Uddenberg (1998), affectivity is in constant dialogue with our cultural and social context and our basic needs are consequently not static.<sup>10</sup> In this perspective affective sustainability contributes in a fairly wide sense to reducing the desire for new, which short term might slow down the wheels in the economic system. However, instead of having an increased number of versions aimed at the same need, we might experience more products, which really care for us in an improved way. In addition, this is likely to enhance a culture of development rather than merely innovation and will in turn also stimulate consumerism even if hopefully in a more progressive way. Without anticipating the conclusions in this thesis, it is important to emphasise that affective sustainability is not, when correctly interpreted, likely to promote conservation in a way that hampers innovation.

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<sup>10</sup> Basic needs should not be interpreted as biological needs in this context (Maslow, 1970)

## 4:2 Communication and creation of the classic

We are constantly exposed to messages un-consciously and consciously influencing our choices and experiencing other people telling us what is worth having: first and foremost marketers but also curators at museums and exhibition centres, journalists and stylists, authors or whoever we might recognise as our peers. The qualities classic and timeless could thus be makings of communication or alternatively learning from design history<sup>11</sup>. Can we consequently also be influenced to perceive objects as affectively sustainable?

An object, which is affectively sustainable and thus in the words of Dewey “holds attention indifferent of number of approaches” (1929, p. 269) is not by definition equivalent to a classic or a timeless object. Assuming that we nevertheless can learn to regard an object as affectively sustainable, will we continue to like this object for an unforeseeable time? This would probably call for continuous influencing. Marketing theory and practice teaches that communication may lift a product to a certain level, but hardly even constant promotion will keep it there if it does not continue to serve its purpose. This coincides with Dewey’s (1934) arguing that we can only develop our senses by experience, not by direct influence.

Classic and timeless are undoubtedly product qualities, which are inadequately defined and *icons* and *good design* also falls into this category. Where it is relevant for the analysis this issue will be further addressed in this research, primarily as part of the deconstruction (chapter III), but it will not be elaborated into areas of branding and meta-products. The conceptual change from the timeless to the affectively sustainable implies un-conscious learning, which according to Wilson (2002) drawing on Damasio (1994) takes a very long time: it is evidently more difficult to convince the un-conscious than the conscious. Creating an affectively sustainable object by communication appears in this perspective not to be a realistic option, even if theoretically possible. From a design history point of view this later possibility is more viable as it offers a definition of the timeless object: it belongs markedly to a certain era, but we have been influenced to perceive it as timeless.

## 4:3 Affective sustainability and affective design

There is a growing body of knowledge on emotion and design but as far as is known no definition of affective design as yet, which from time to time is used as a synonym for emotional design. Emotions are not stable as sources which actually cause their arousal might be transient, which also is a point made by Norman (2004). However, he continues to argue that emotion only is a way to relate a product to the user: to evoke his or her interest. This can easily become jaded if the product does not function on the ‘behavioural level’ and finally, and most important, on the ‘reflective level’. Emotional design is in its fundamental form thus not sustainable. Does this also concern affective design?

When almost legendary then editor of *Elle Decoration* [UK version], Ilse Crawford, in 1997 published her book “Sensual Home”<sup>12</sup>, she boosted the

<sup>11</sup> As discussed earlier in this chapter, historians’ tendency to categorise into eras represents an understanding of time, which is in opposition to any definition of timelessness. See further chapter III, section 3:2.

<sup>12</sup> Complete with a touch-feel cover.

varieties of design, which appealed to the senses commercially and inspired many designers. Suddenly everyone wanted to respond to this *new need*. The book is in some respects a very logic continuation of the health centred; *take care of you* trend, starting several years earlier and which is described by Hill in a more scholarly interpretation (2003). This trend has as it appears merged with the new need: it has become part of our well-being to understand our sensual needs, to allow emotions to be expressed in ways of acting and living, which includes the choice of material artefacts.

In the academic terms the interest in design on the affective level has resulted in conferences and papers on the theme of *design and the senses* and, as mentioned above, a body of knowledge has been built up. The International Conference on Designing Pleasurable Products and Interfaces, DPPI, is held every second year starting in 1999. The Conference is described by the organisers as ‘one of the leading international forums for the exchange of ideas and information about affective design’. The latest conference, held in Eindhoven, focused on ‘product design and the creation of a design science’.

Moreover, a conference in Lisbon in September 2003, had the subtitle ‘Senses and Sensibility – Linking Tradition to Innovation through Design’, which also well expressed the aim, ‘Can we pave the way for innovations by exploring the sensual sides of tradition?’ The motivation behind the aim was formulated as: ‘it is known that an emotional link between subject and object might have been established historically’.

Finally, The MET University in Ankara hosted a conference in July 2004 on Design and Emotion, the 4<sup>th</sup> in a series. The conference themes were framed by pleasure, experience and time: “In a society where subjective pleasurable experiences have become important factors for design, what is the effect on product longevity?” An interesting question raised in the description of themes was whether design appealing to emotions prolongs the product lifecycle in a positive way – or if the emotions set in motion could be experienced as a burden?

In the article ‘Building emotions in design’, Lee Crossely (2003) of the design agency PDD Group suggests observation of behaviour to find out not only how people relate to objects in different situations but how they build relationships with other people and how these in turn influence their attitudes towards certain products. This is proposed as a method to build emotions in design: ‘... a toolkit of words, images and activities that encourage people to express emotional responses verbally, visually and physically.’ (p. 42).

Another fresh theme found in an article, is ‘natural aesthetes’. The environmentalist and Oxford professor George Monbiot<sup>13</sup> writes that it has long been accepted that most forms of art are conserved because they have an aesthetic function, even though they no longer fulfil a social or cultural role. He asks for similar reasons to apply to the conservation of buildings, environments, wildlife and so on: there need not be an economical, ecological, social or political reason, only an affective.

These examples make it quite clear that design on the affective level is not immediately about sustainability. The realisation that design and affect not only is a subject area attracting growing interest but also is a trend, is vital for my continued research.

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<sup>13</sup> Oxford Brookes University (2000)

#### 4:4 Sustainable brands

Could affective sustainability, or timelessness, be attached to a brand rather than a product? There are numerous examples of brands, which have retained their significance over very long periods, and in changing human contexts. Branding has become an increasingly important factor in the creation of product identities in communication societies. Talking here not only about commercial branding but also about the humanistic and political, the most well known of the former probably is the Red Cross with its equivalents also in non-Christian cultures and societies. Sustaining a brand is a separate subject for research, which is not included in my work, the main reason being that a brand does not solely represent an object or a product but a *meta-product*: a product and its intentionally built image. That is why it is quite easily transferable to a totally different range of products, which will then benefit from its image: Porsche, car/sunglasses, Caterpillar, road-machine/boots to mention a few. This is also the reason why a brand might well live on and prosper even if the product it was initially linked to is no longer relevant. This phenomenon was the topic of an article in Financial Times (2004) headed '*Kodak film ends*', quote:

'Some products have been displaced – typewriters, vinyl records and 32-volume sets of encyclopaedias – but the world's big brand-owners have emerged largely unscathed'.

The article argues that this was not expected: a reoccurring death of brands would have been more likely. What we have seen is instead; the same brand, the same area of use, for example the creation of documents, but a new product: computer instead of typewriter. However, according to this article, the dominant Kodak product, film, has been too closely associated with the brand and the meta-product consequently too weak. As Kodak has now stopped manufacturing film it is an open question whether it will succeed by moving rapidly into digital imaging.

Sustainable branding may also refer to graphic design, where Shell is one of the most long-lived and famous examples. Graphic design and designers mainly occupied in this area are not part of the further analyses in this work as it would then expand into yet more disciplines. These are judged as not contributing in proportion to the effort it would demand from a research point of view. Compared to product design, graphic design is more directly involved and playing a more crucial role in some very diverse areas: politics, propaganda, education and advertising (Heller, 1998).

#### 4:5 Lasting fashion

When clothing items do not disappear fast enough from the hangers in the stores, the reason is often named fashion: the person buying for the store had misjudged the fashion signals and the price of these items has perhaps to be reduced. Clothes are thus often doomed to a short life: if the media and the manufacturers were to decide, this would only be seasonal and has primarily nothing to do with physical quality. In western culture there are very few examples of distinct, culturally bound and long lasting clothing items except folklore outfits, compared to other cultures for example the Asian, where Japan and India have their kimonos and saris respectively. These are still in everyday as well as festive use and have also inspired designers in the western part of the

world. Interesting knowledge is undoubtedly to be found by exploring the reasons behind these differences in clothing culture, but these paths have not been pursued in this work, nor has fashion design in general. Fashion has increasingly become about branding and the forming of identity and hence typically about creating meta-products. As mentioned above, all type of brands need in effect to be constantly nourished to sustain.

*One definition of an affectively sustainable object is that this competence [to sustain] is inherent.*

## 5. From assumptions to directions

Discussing *Research Methodology* and describing the *Methods* is vital to all research but will here be done more in detail due to the choice of a customised approach. *Chapter II* is dedicated to this task and concludes part one; the *presentation*.

*Bridge to part two* discusses the complexity of the phenomenon *the timeless* as a foreword to the deconstruction and reconstruction which make up the next chapters.

Initiating part two is *Chapter III, Deconstruction*, combining a literature review and desk research focusing on *the timeless* and aiming at finding out “how representation inhabits reality”, to cite Lupton and Miller in their 1994 writing on Jacques Derrida and deconstruction.

In other words: to find out which reality the denominations timeless, classical, eternal and their abbreviations represent, not only in a philosophical sense but also as a matter of other academic application and also everyday as well as professional use. After looking into all the disciplines, which this research embraces and which are referred to above, in a consequent search for these denominations and the contexts in which they appear a pattern including various notions, perspectives and dimensions has emerged. This pattern has allowed for timeless to be systematically [as opposed to randomly] deconstructed. Chapter III is for this purpose divided into two main sections: Dimensions and Notions and the latter in five further sub-sections: to waste or to sustain, time, tradition, aesthetics and perception.

Each of these sections is summarised as part of the actual chapter while the conclusions are discussed in *Chapter IV, Reconstruction*, resulting in the grounded theory and the conceptual statements or hypotheses, which will serve as search tools in the applications.

*The bridge to part three* establishes the conceptual change from timeless to *affective sustainability*.

*Chapter V, Application and Analyses* is comprised of descriptions, analysis and reports of three in between them different types of applications. Firstly, a hermeneutic analysis of selected designers: their theories and practice. Graphic diagrams are used to illustrate how these designers relate to certain parameters [derived from the hypotheses] and each other. Secondly, an online investigation among post-graduate design students focused on the conceptualisation and exemplification of affective sustainability. Finally and thirdly, interviews with commercial design clients: producers of designed objects, discussing the commercial reality behind the notions of the timeless, the classic and the icon and



introducing the concept of the affectively sustainable object. Each section is individually summarised as part of the chapter, whilst the applications as a whole are discussed and concluded in *Chapter VI, Grounding*.

Grounding refers also to preparing for the directions by finally analysing and critically reviewing the findings from the entire research: part two and three.

*The bridge to part five* confirms that affective sustainability has been taken from concept to quality to prepare for *practical* application.

*Chapter VII, Directions*, categorises the findings as indications of various significance or strengths and presents them as a platform for alternative thinking, conditioning the guidelines or directions, which follow. Important but less significant or more complicated indications are presented as topics for design discourse and continued research.

The final comments close the circle by suggesting that the affective is added to the topical content of sustainability.

## CHAPTER II. Methodology and Methods

### 1. Research methodology for design

Design research is a young discipline currently engaging in an extended debate concerning its place between science and practice. It follows that methodology for design research is a developing area. The debate has resulted in a polarisation: proponents of the application of strict research and design methods favour an overall approach similar to that of engineering design. The scholarly view promotes an approach to design research, which is developed from disciplines like psychology, philosophy, sociology and anthropology. The resulting contribution to practice from this type of research is often not immediately evident, which probably is not its aim either. The debate moreover casts doubt on whether there is space for practiced based research at all between the poles. This is another way to pose the question: Is practice-based research, research at all in the sense we know it? Amid these doubts this area continues to develop and the arguments concerning different approaches to design research persists.

Even if used above, the word *suffering* is not totally appropriate. Design researchers of today might feel bewildered as there are no well-established theories and practices (read methodologies and methods) to turn to like in more pure scientific or scholarly research milieus. On the other hand there will probably never be. What will happen as design research develops is that an increasing number of documented research projects will enrich design research methodology, enable evaluation and form a source from which to choose research methods. A qualified guess is that these will be customised rather than typified, as design research often is multidisciplinary. However, some research projects will be more scientific than others. The most apparent option for the design researcher will be to critically review existing methodologies; to study typified and established qualitative methods of inquiry and quantitative methods of research together with more customised approaches. Always having to blend and invent could of course be called 'suffering' but why not instead claim that this is very positive, a built in dynamic in design research. This dynamic can of course be severely hampered by examiners, if they insist on absolute rigour in the choice of methods and underlying methodologies.

#### 1:1 Categories of design knowledge

Every research student must live up to a number of important preconditions concerning his or her project. The examiners are of course not to blame if these are not fulfilled.

Poggenpohl (2002) refers to the taxonomy of Cross (2001), who in the paper, 'Developing a Discipline', and points out the importance of deciding to which category of design knowledge you want to contribute before you make decisions on the level of methodology. The three main categories, according to him, are *design epistemology; the study of designerly ways of knowing*, *design praxiology; the study of practices and processes of design*, *design phenomenology; the study of the forms and configurations of artefacts*. Knowing

what knowledge is the aim should be understood as facilitating decision making, however, the choice of methodology will not automatically become apparent.

## 1:2 Research focus

Beyond deciding on the type of design knowledge comes the need to establish a research focus: develop a theory, enhance process/method/practice or develop a tool? Referring to Sato, Poggenpohl (2002) claims that these are interrelated but the relationship might either be weak or strong. They are all 'legitimate outcomes of design' but require different research methods as they range from abstract to concrete: Whilst theory is an abstract compilation of facts, it might in turn be used in a "systematic procedure" to create practice. A tool in this sense cannot be developed from theory though, it needs a methodological basis or alternatively to be based on practice. A tool is operational (Poggenpohl, 2002).

## 2. Methodology for this research project

The main research disciplines in this work are scholarly, as noted in the introduction (Chapter I). Scientific disciplines like sustainable development and cognitive theory, including neuroscience, are looked into rather than researched.

*Timelessness has primarily philosophical implications in academic discourse, according to Osborne.*

Though this statement was made in 1995 it appears still to be valid. Furthermore: *there is little evidence of timelessness at all having been the subject of research.*

It has consequently been of major importance to start the research with a very distinct aim and avoid getting so deeply involved in philosophical issues as not to find the way round, about or out. Even if the subject is virgin from a research angle, the disciplines, which are being researched, are not. For that reason the outcome of the research will not necessarily be basic in the sense of not being in the reach of practical application. It is aimed at adding to design theory and thus an expansion of knowledge and of consciousness raising among designers about how to think in order to be able to create designs that last beyond their physical capacity. Sometimes they may even outlast generations and will also transcend family as well as national borders, sometimes even cultural borders.

## 2:1 Categories: types of knowledge to be studied

The focus is on studying 'designerly ways of knowing': epistemology. Important to note is that the research will pay special attention to what lies beyond the established ways of knowing: it will set out from the notion of timelessness and be guided further through findings from this entry point and also include the study of processes and practice of design: praxiology. The study of this type of knowledge will follow the same strategy as for epistemology: the mapping of as many varieties of established practices and processes as possible to allow for a look beyond.

## 2:2 Focus: theory, processes, practice - or tool

The issue of theory making in design is discussed further in the introduction to chapter V, the application phase. As is already briefly mentioned above, the focus is to expand knowledge, mainly by trying to combine existing knowledge in new ways. The aim is to *develop design theory without necessarily claiming to make a new theory*, which is further discussed below and in section 1 of chapter V. The actual claim is to enhance design process by developing useful parameters for designers to consider.

Timelessness is most commonly understood as a notion of an implicit quality. When applied to naming a design feature it must be regarded as more tacit even if still very faceted. It ought therefore to be named a phenomenon. However, to call the work a phenomenological study (as described in Creswell, 1999) is not correct and also somehow pretentious, as it does not involve any advanced primary research. To name it *an exploratory study of a phenomenon* is more appropriate. The stress on the phenomenological in the approach is motivated by the fact that this explains the somewhat loose and discursive structure, which is a necessity as any attempt to create the opposite could result in unexpected correlations and connotations being overlooked. The resemblance with a true phenomenological study ends at this point. The latter comprises deep individual interviews, which demand special training and experience. These are here replaced with the analyses of texts (Filmer, 1998) and of cultural objects, (Slater, 1998). This combination of different methods was also one interesting theme of the Qualitative Research Methods course held at Goldsmiths College autumn-spring 1999-2000<sup>14</sup>.

## 2:3 Deconstruction as critical thinking

The initial doubts voiced about the choice of subject for this research started a process of critical thinking. The move into a phase of *deconstruction* was in a sense motivated by practical rather than theoretical reasons at the time. According to Henwood (1996) to deconstruct is also to look for meanings, which are taken for granted or which might be suppressed as they are put in doubt. In chapter III, the phenomenon of timelessness is deconstructed through a discourse analysis of texts based on the assumption that the true meaning of 'timeless' has been obscured by language. *This type of approach is called constructionist* and according to Potter (1996) and Gill (1996) it is multidisciplinary or 'on the margins' of several disciplines, including psychology, political science and literary studies.

To be constructive in this sense is to try to find out what language is meant to say rather than what it is saying. This critical approach first found its reason for being during the modernist period when there was a rationale for everything, including for timelessness: an object became according to many of its proponents 'automatically' timeless if it was 'simple' and devoid of ornamentation. Derrida presented in his 'Of Grammatology' of 1976 what was to become the advance guard in literary studies: 'There is no such thing as opposition between speech and writing.' The language might obscure the meaning, but it is there (Lupton, 1994).

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<sup>14</sup> Goldsmiths College is part of University of London.

The true meaning of an object was thus there, it needed only to be made visible, which the modernist saw as their mission.

*There is nothing called a deconstructionist approach* in methodological terms. Deconstruction is often used as a metaphor for critical thinking within any of the three categories: epistemology, praxiology and phenomenology. Gill (1996) stresses the importance of doing some kind of coding of all texts, which are to be analysed. To allow for this, you must have a theme. The theme here is of course timeless and timelessness and the coding takes the form of *creating closures* as described in section 2:3:2 below.

Deconstruction is best known for a wider audience where it has taken physical form as in the hands of architects like Gehry and Liebeskind even if Derrida's writing often is referred to in academic works.

#### 2:3:1 THE STUDY OF A PHENOMENON THROUGH DECONSTRUCTION

What is typically called a literature review is in this work an integral part of the actual research and guided by a distinct aim to deconstruct the phenomenon of timelessness. 'Desk-research' is probably the most appropriate term for this liaison between the deconstruction process and the literature review. Most important throughout this type of research is to keep focus on the phenomenon under study and retain consciousness of the initial aim with the deconstruction.

Phenomenological sociology is a social theory developed by Alfred Schutz [on the foundation of phenomenology as understood by Edmund Husserl] in an aim to explain the difference between social action and how individuals experience it (Schwandt, 2001). Even if though produced by individuals it is not understood but taken for granted as an image of the everyday world according to Schutz Phenomenology is in itself a philosophy, which has been interpreted in various ways. Schwandt is referring to Crotty and Hammond, Howarth & Keat when claiming that there is a plain distinction on how it is applied in qualitative inquiry in North America and Continental Europe respectively. Whilst there is in the former an emphasis on the subjective, existential and non-critical, there is in the latter almost the opposite.

'...an effort to get beneath or behind subjective experience to reveal the genuine , objective nature of things and as a critique of both taken-for-granted meanings and subjectivism.' (Schwandt, (2001, p. 192)

As a category of knowledge, design phenomenology is defined as 'the study of forms and configurations of artefacts', citing Cross (Poggenpohl, 2002). This definition is seemingly inspired by the North American standpoint and focused on physical representation. If it is at all relevant to study forms and configurations [other than for ergonomic and production purposes] is another subject of debate. In the Danish magazine *Humaniora* three scholars argue for a re-focus from the physical and tactile to a wider design notion. Even though writing under a common theme they express fairly diverging views: Aesthetics is part of the physical representation and diverts attention from the importance of the actual design process when focused, according to Friedman (2005). Both explicit and implicit characteristics are concrete, argues Friberg (2005), on the other hand. They both ought to be taken into account as such. This would, according to him, mean that the humanities are assigned much greater importance as a source for expanding design knowledge. 'It is the wider connotations of aesthetics, which



ought to be explored, rather than solely the most mundane'. The third scholar, Dybdahl (2005), claims that there are at least nine distinct disciplines within the humanities to be added to an interdisciplinary design field to match those which focus on physical representation and technique.

As a theoretical foundation for qualitative research methods, phenomenology emphasises the need for the researcher to set aside all subjective presuppositions. The term for this is 'bracketing'. As a first step the researcher needs to reflect on which presuppositions he or she holds and then make a very serious effort to control them to avoid unwanted biases in the research results. A phenomenological approach normally also involves interaction between the researcher and the persons in the research sample, mainly through interviews. Different techniques are available for the latter as for the analyses of gathered data (Cassell & Symon, 2004). The aim is to detect re-occurring comments or behaviour, which will indicate that a certain phenomenon is influencing the subject of research. It is up to the individual researcher to analyse the data from a critical or non-critical stance, to stay with or go behind subjective experience.

The phenomenon is thus not given from the outset, as in this work. Instead of trying to identify common features, which would indicate that timelessness is present, the phenomenon has been deconstructed. At this point there are similarities with a phenomenological approach: The deconstruction is an effort to dispose of eventual subjective presuppositions blurring the 'true meaning' of the phenomenon. To study a phenomenon is in effect not the same thing as using a phenomenological approach for a study.

The choice to study the phenomenon of timelessness through deconstruction is thus made to ensure that as many dimensions as possible are being analysed with minimum subjective biases. To arrive at total objectivity is not feasible. The subject area is not virgin on the level of professional consciousness but relatively un-researched. This work can consequently not be a logical continuation of what is already achieved but the deconstruction nevertheless enables maximum sense to be made of other researchers' and also practitioners' work.

What is said above also explains why deconstruction in this work is labelled desk-research rather than literature review. One might object that there is no true difference and that it is more a matter of taste or at least planning, depending on the research subject (Murray, 2002). Chris Hart in "Doing a Literature Review" (1998) takes a slightly more conservative stand, where the whole idea with the literature review is to map existing work in the chosen area, argue about and test it, forming ones own ideas and finally analysing these critically. To work in this way has for apparent reasons not been an option in this case.

### 2:3:2 CREATING CLOSURES

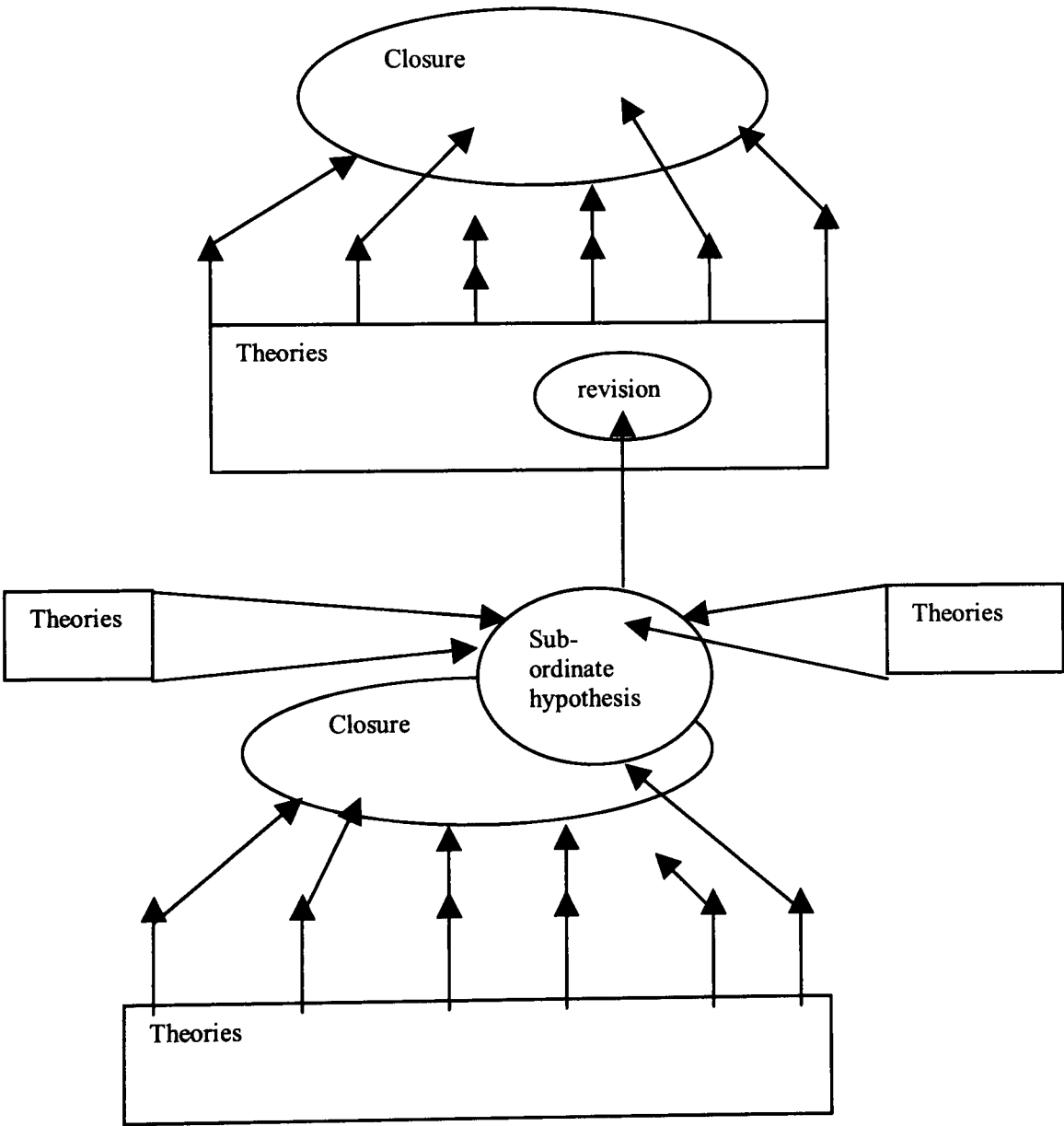
The actual term heading this section is borrowed from Murray (2002) and describes an important part of the methodology applied in this work. It also illustrates accurately what differentiates desk research from a [pure] literature review.

The first main closure is to decide on *the subject areas* to be further explored and to make certain exclusions and reservations. These are discussed in chapter I, Introduction.

The second main closure concerns *the order* in which to present existing theories within these subject areas. This order is important as references to what is already written in a work facilitate understanding and enhance logic whilst references to what will be written might do the opposite and should be avoided.

*The summary or the summarising comments* of sections and sub-sections are of course distinct closures as are chapter IV, Reconstruction, chapter VI, Grounding and the bridging sections.

More interesting from a research point of view are the ‘in text closures’. These might not be immediately noticeable for the reader. They allow a review and an eventual revision of the built up body of knowledge in a steady rolling process. Even if not noticeable, it is presumed that these closures make it possible for the reader to follow the argumentation and, to use Murray’s words: ‘showing that you have achieved something you set out to do’ (p. 174). The idea of creating ‘in text closures’ will therefore also guide the desk research in section 2 of chapter V. The figure below is a graphic illustration of the intellectual planning explained above. It is to be viewed as an ongoing process over the duration of my research, not as describing a fixed part.



The length of the arrows representing the theories on which the closures are based indicates their weighted importance and strength [of the theories as part of the analysis].

## 2:4 Grounded theory. Into a new theoretical domain

The result of the deconstruction is a suggestion concerning a revised meaning of timelessness. It is above also labelled *true meaning*. The revised meaning thus constructed includes four conceptual categories and their properties are formulated into 4 hypotheses or conceptual statements. The nature of these properties has made an epistemological change necessary: *the phenomenon timeless* is better described by the *concept affective sustainability*. The four (4) categories function as search tools to enable a deeper study of the phenomenon whereas the conceptual statements are points of reference for the identification of the causal processes. These form the base for the grounded theory and are related to the affectively sustainable design or object in two distinct ways:

- a. The design processes as designerly ways of reasoning and thinking to aim at affective sustainability.
- b. The process in the mind of the beholder in which an object becomes affectively sustainable.

*Designers' knowledge of b is a precondition for the development of a. Not only the nature of the process in b is important, but also how and by what it is influenced.*

The collection and analysis of data is described in chapter V. The two types of data, dA and dB, are collected through different modes:

dA.

- Analysis of texts in documents followed by coding in graphic charts, chapter V, section 2

dB.

- Online workshop in the form of a fictional exhibition, chapter V, section 3
- Interviews, chapter V, section 4.

According to Schwandt (2001) *the term grounded theory* 'is often used in a non-specific way to refer to any approach to developing theoretical ideas (concepts, models and formal theories) that begins with data' (p. 110).

*Grounded theory methodology* is on the other hand very specific: rigorous and advanced procedures developed to generate new and substantive theory of social phenomena. Schwandt is here referring to Glaser & Strauss, Strauss and Strauss & Corbin. The idea of grounded theory as a concept grew out of circumstances: research was focused on verifying existing classic theories rather than on generating new theories. The prime aim when applying grounded theory is to avoid stay within any 'predetermined theoretical or conceptual framework' (Länsisalmi, Peiró & Kivimäki, 2004, p. 242). If a phenomenological approach is applied in an effort not to be hampered by subjective presuppositions, the grounded theory approach could be said to try and steer free of the academic equivalents. Theory making within the realm of design research is debated not only from a scientific point of view. The controversy also regards whether a

theory advances or restricts processes and practice in design. Are theories at all compatible with creativity? (Nelson & Stolterman, 2000). These questions are further highlighted and discussed in section 1 of chapter V, in this work. It is here enough to note that the task of the researcher is not to produce “a perfect description of the area he or she wishes to understand, but to develop a theory that account for much of the relevant behaviour” (Länsisalmi, Peiró & Kivimäki, p. 242, 2004).

Sampling in grounded theory is designated as theoretical, which means that the actual sampling is the result of how the concepts develop over the course of the data collection and analysis. When additional analysis does not contribute to anything new, no more selections of samples are added (Schwandt, 2001, Cassell & Symon, 2004).

## 2:5 Summary

As already discussed in the introduction, a substantial part of this work has the form of a quest, where the ability to set boundaries in combination with an open mind are preconditions. Generally, this is a kind of warranty that ‘unexpected correlations and connotations’ are not overlooked. A methodological approach that supports the openness but still offers the necessary formal structure is imperative for success in this type of research where a lot of knowledge must be continuously transferred from one phase to the next. In each new phase it must be carefully digested to allow for new relevant intake.

*A constructionist approach is used to study a phenomenon and allow for the creation of conceptual categories with well-defined properties. These are necessary for the application of a grounded theory methodology even in a much simplified and customised form.*

## 3. Applied methods

It is not constructive or even feasible to describe methodology and methods under separate headings. Each methodological approach offers a number of methods, depending on the rigour with which it is applied. To an extent there is a value in looking also at methods when discussing methodology, which was also done above.

It is therefore mainly *the methods used for the collection of data*, which are described in this section. They will be accounted for more in detail in chapter V as an introduction to the reports and analyses of each application respectively.

### 3:1 Data: designers behind affective sustainability

Data (type dA) is collected through the analysis of documents; mainly autobiographies, biographies, design historical reviews, abstracts from exhibition catalogues, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, but also periodicals, journals and newspapers. The criterion for a designer to be selected is the number of documents, minimum two, in which his or her name appears in relation to the creation of the timeless. The number of designers selected for this study was determined by a kind of theoretical sampling: The value of additional information

from the study of yet another designer finally does set the number (see section 2:4, above). The analysis of the data is made in six steps:

1. Forming *Four Schools of Thought* based on the most prominent theories and philosophies likely to be influencing the selected designers.
2. Categorising each designer after his or hers approximate adherence to these *schools* with the help of a graphic chart.
3. Analysing each school using the four conceptual categories resulting from chapter III and IV with the help of graphic charts.
4. A deepening of the analysis to include the designers using the four conceptual statements (chapter IV) and with the help of the charts.
5. Exploring additional information on the designers as a result of the analysis in point 4.
6. Reviewing the conceptual categories.

### 3:2 Data: a fictional online exhibition

Data (type dB) is provided by an investigation, which is planned according to a special concept: 4 groups of MA students; 2 in UK, 2 in Sweden, 2 in Industrial Design, 2 in Furniture design are asked to curate a fictional exhibition, to make a free choice of 5 objects for an exhibition on the theme of *The Affective Sustainability of Objects*. The only additional criterion given in the instruction is that the participants should base their selection on *objects, which you know have been around for quite a long time and which you think will stay around*. On the purpose made website, there are also a choice of four texts meant as an introduction of the fictional exhibition in a visitor's catalogue. The participants are asked to choose the text they regard as being most appropriate when it comes to describing the exhibition theme in general as well as their choice of objects. One of the texts is based directly on those conceptual statements, which have been developed through the constructionist approach described in section 2 of this chapter. The other three texts are informed by the work-hypotheses, which have been abandoned as the research has progressed. The respondents are also allowed to write their own text as an additional option, not as a replacement of the choice of one of the given texts. An online dialogue with me is possible and encouraged.<sup>15</sup> The investigation could take the form of a survey but also turn into an online workshop. It is purposely developed to be very flexible due to the philosophical nature of the subject of research: the timeless, and to follow the first of the two vital lines of inquiry (p. 9): can knowledge on how to make an object retain its significance over time in a changing human context *be accessed and applied*? On which cognitive level is timelessness thus working?

Expertise on curating asserts that when given a theme; type of work, the name of an artist or a designer, a period or an event, mental images emerges dependent on

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Arendt reports in the Guardian, 23 March, 2006 on 'The pick'n'mix museum', a new concept of how to curate: An interactive design exhibition online: 'The Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum in New York will pioneer a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to art appreciation, posting its archive of 250000 artefacts on to internet browsers to fiddle with. The emphasis will be on interactivity: budding curators will be able to surf the collection by theme, pick favourites and fashion their own exhibition covering anything from couture to cutlery.'

In January 2005 a couple of museum with design collections were approached for a joint project on 'curators online' for this investigation. They declined to participate.

experience almost immediately. These images, rather than strategic reflections, continue to guide the curator throughout the planning of the exhibition (Nash, 2005). The data is analysed in three steps:

1. Respondents overall compliance with the tasks.
2. Selected objects with regard to category and tendency to clusters based on type and/or designer.
3. Selected texts and how they match the selected objects.

Throughout the analysis these data are completed with information, which allows them to be explored more deeply. The method will provide indications on several key issues:

- Compliance (i). The cognitive level on which affective sustainability is working. Criterion: The result of the respondents' interaction with the tasks.
- Selected objects and comments on these (ii). Associations raised by the term affective sustainability. Eventual priorities concerning the conceptual categories. Criterion: Tendency of clusters. This indicates the relevance and thus the usability [in a wider sense] of affective sustainability as a concept. A cluster could be made up of for example the same object/s or type of objects, objects of approximately the same age, objects by the same designer or school of designers and vernacular objects. The type of cluster gives direction also for completing analyses.
- Selected texts (iii). The conceptual statements relevance to affective sustainability. Criterion: Clusters around text 3 will confirm evident relevance while clusters around other texts will indicate need for further exploration: rethinking or expanding the conceptual categories and reformulation of the conceptual statements.
- Choice to write own text (iv). Abundance of these may strengthen or weaken the indicated relevance of the conceptual statements. Individual texts will be analysed for details to explore further.

### 3:3. Data: a commercial view

Personal interviews give access to data (type dB). Interaction is to be preferred here in an effort to minimize the confusion of language, which sometimes occurs when academia meets business.

The interviews are semi-structured around the four hypotheses but formulated to be commercially relevant.

The sampling is again technical. The important primary selection includes:

- Two (2) companies whose business idea is: (i) the production and marketing of contemporary furniture, which they judge as becoming the 'antics' of the future, (ii) the re-edition of furniture and home-ware designed many years ago but still regarded as highly relevant.
- One (1) company whose main design strategy is to build on designs, which have already proven to be commercially successful in the hands of other companies.

If the analyses of the interviews show a major degree of congruence in how affective sustainability is viewed commercially, no more interviews will be added. In a reverse situation more companies are to be contacted for interviews. Congruence might point in a number of directions: confirming, expanding, opposing or questioning the conceptual categories and statements. The interviews will in either case provide a number of possible criteria for the commercial definition of affectively sustainable products to be further explored.

### 3:4. Summary

*The methods described are customised to the research aim. They are specific and cannot be claimed to be varieties of other methods, the interviews excluded, although derived from established research methodology,*

## 4. Making of a theory

There are two important criteria when working with grounded theory, according to Schwandt (2001) referring to Strauss & Corbin:

1. The study must be well developed in relation to the studied phenomenon, which must be kept in focus throughout the data collection.
2. The collection of data, the analysis and the resulting theory must stand in reciprocal relationship to each other.

As indicated earlier, the guiding methodology and the applied methods are means of exploration, not of producing statistically viable results and thus the provision of some kind of scientific proof. The aim of the explorations is to arrive at a grounded theory through data collection and analysis, which both involves what is called “*constant comparison*” (Schwandt, 2001). The methods applied are not rigorous enough to claim adherence to grounded theory. The research proceeds instead by the application of a closely related method: *comparing* and *searching* for similarities and differences enabling the *identification* of underlying uniformities.

The generation of *a new theory* is the ultimate goal of grounded theory. A more realistic goal for my work might be *to expand and combine existing theories into a new concept informing the design process*. Informing by introducing a new concept is probably a shorter way into design practice than presenting a new theory. However, it represents an alternative way of thinking, which is not immediately evident.

The aim to directly inform design practice does not rule out another aim: the creation of a base for continued research. The aim with this research, and hence the choice of methodology and methods is to present *parameters*, which will serve as points of reference for designers when aiming at including affective sustainability in their designs. These parameters ought to contribute also something new to the general understanding of sustainability and to expand design education into disciplines, which are able to offer important theoretical support.



## ***Bridge to part two:***

### ***The timeless: a complex phenomenon***

The complexity of *the timeless* becomes immediately evident when making a search in academic and other professional books and periodicals. Depending on context and aim, a multitude of dimensions and facets appear. This is to be compared to the version *the timeless object*, which in popular communication is well established and seemingly unambiguous. Contrary to this, what is *a traditional object* seems to be debated. If the former is supposed to represent something, which will last *forever*, the latter signals mostly *then*. *Now* is rarely related to either of these objects but mostly used to indicate that an object is tendentious [in an aim to blend in].

This popular approach to *the timeless* adds of course to its overall complexity. Lone Osborne (1995) discusses a multitude of approaches to *the timeless*, centred on time and its cultural interpretations involving ancient, modern and tradition as well as now and new. According to Osborne, the Enlightenment introduced the idea of new time as superior to what had been before and thereby permitted the future to be conceptualised: as far as our scientific advances might bring us. The relevance of *eternity* consequently diminished: what was beyond scientific advances could not be depended on as a truth. Osborne continues to suggest that after World War II, not only has *the future* been cut back but *modern* been put in opposition to *contemporary* (as once ancient to modern) meaning that *now* has been detached from the former and even at times replaced by *then*.

Following this displacement, the relation between *new* and *modern* is changing. There is *newness* beyond the modern. Understanding Osborne, *the timeless* is above this conflict and illustrates the encounter of tradition and the present. Gombrich (1959) discusses the idea of *timeless presence*, one example being the sense of the dead always being present among the living.

Neither approach reduces the complexity of *the timeless* but serves the function of suggesting how to proceed. The necessary deconstruction cannot consider solely the *cultural dimension*, as it would seriously delimit the analysis. The idea of timeless presence points for one to the impact of human understanding, conscious or unconscious, and actualises the *cognitive dimension*. Pondering the timeless object is a realisation of the *material* in the immaterial and introduces thereby a third dimension.

The first facet to appear when studying *the timeless* is the *philosophical*. As a separation of body and mind no longer is regarded as relevant, this perspective ought to be complemented with the *affective*, which involves all the senses. Furthermore, the materialization into an object prompts for a *physical* perspective.

## **Part two: Timeless**

## CHAPTER III. Deconstruction

### 1. The deconstruction of a well-established construct: the timeless

The customised methods used for the deconstruction are basically derived from grounded theory methodology as described in chapter II. The philosophical, affective and physical perspectives of timelessness have instigated the analysis and suggested a number of relevant notions to analyse. Each of these analyses has given direction to the search for additional information and knowledge and provided links to other notions. Importantly, already the initial overview of possible perspectives and the analyses of these revealed that the phenomenon has to be viewed in more than one aspect or dimension. The method may be best illustrated by the image of a tree developing its roots in the directions of space, water and nutrition. The deconstruction consequently has two major steps, where the first is a precondition for the other.

Firstly it is important to define how timelessness is understood in the design and academic community but also popularly: which perspectives are normally applied or possible to apply and furthermore the possible dimensions or aspects<sup>16</sup> of these.

Secondly, each of these dimensions is to be analysed on the level of which relevant notions or conceptions<sup>17</sup> it involves.

During the process it was considered important to maintain a steady focus on the phenomenon under research but also to retain in conscious that the aim is not to deconstruct. The latter is a method used only to advance towards the research aim.

#### *Perspectives and dimensions.*

Three perspectives have been applied in the deconstruction process: (A) *the physical* as represented by the actual object, (B) *the affective* considering the human and (C) *the philosophical* given that timelessness from a formal language position is not intended to describe a physical object<sup>18</sup>.

Each of these perspectives has been analysed in three dimensions of the phenomenon: (i) *the material* - the dimension of sustaining, (ii) *the cognitive* – the dimension of intellectual understanding and (iii) *the cultural* – the dimension of relative understanding. These dimensions are mainly explored in section 2 below starting with the material, as the basic aim of this research is to understand if and how timelessness can be translated into a physical object

#### *Notions.*

The physical, affective and philosophical perspectives are continuously applied throughout the analyses of the notions as each of these has a distinct relation to one or more dimension.

The material dimension (i) is examined by putting the notions of sustain and sustainable (maintain and capable of being maintained) beside waste

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<sup>16</sup> Dimension is what concerns the deconstruction of the timeless throughout this work used in the meaning of aspect.

<sup>17</sup> Notion is what concerns the deconstruction of the timeless throughout this work used in the meaning of conception.

<sup>18</sup> Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, [www.britannica.com/dictionary](http://www.britannica.com/dictionary)

(squander and litter). The notions of *time* and *tradition* are explored separately as part of the cultural dimension (ii). *The aesthetic* is approached simultaneously in the cultural and cognitive dimension (iii) whilst the cognitive dimension (iv) in particular is addressed through *perception*. These notions are all analysed in section 3 below.

The notions of *to sustain-to waste* and *time* are the first to be explored in this section, as one immediate interpretation would be ‘sustaining over time’, when trying to understand timelessness through its dimensions.

## 2. Dimensions

### 2:1 The material

It is worth repeating that the phenomenon of timelessness is in the formal sense purely philosophical. However, it has in popular terms come to represent a physical object both as an adjective, timelessness, and as a noun, the timeless, though it strictly does not have a material dimension. There is logic in viewing timelessness as *immaterial sustainability* but it is not evident that those who are engaged in research and application aimed at sustainable development embrace this added content.

The focus on quality defined in material terms has resulted in products undergoing different kind of physical durability tests. Giving one example, these tests resulted in an informative Swedish label – Möbelfakta - following the product and serving as a warranty for its quality and a marketing tool<sup>19</sup>. Swedish manufacturers have after the closure of the institute in 1981 the opportunity to have their products tested at another special research and test institute or to undertake their own tests according to the norms stated by this institute (Andersson 2003).<sup>20</sup> The labels have here been replaced by protocols. Interviewed in April 2006, Erik Lundh, owner and founder of the Swedish furniture company Källemo, asserted that the reason for the disappearance of these was the insight that there might be more to quality than the purely material.<sup>21</sup>

Quite a few companies still mention in their marketing that the product is tested for durability and this information has lately been completed by other labels stating that the product has been manufactured with environmental concern, is recyclable; only to mention a few. This has had further implications on how lasting qualities of objects are defined and resulted in sustainability, as we commonly know it, being equated with material qualities rather than to include the immaterial qualities. Blincoe (2004) experienced ridicule in the early 1990s when introducing speakers talking about spirituality and sustainability. She maintains that you are still asking for trouble when you voice views about designers having to relate to all aspects of design ‘from economic and lifestyle analysis models to emotions, intuition and human potential’. The designer must, according to Blincoe look ‘at the whole picture’ (p. 33). One reason why these discussions do not take a

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<sup>19</sup> Svenska Möbelinstitutet (The Swedish Furniture Institute) executed these tests and the result was composed on a label ‘Möbelfakta’ (Furniture Facts), which served as some kind of warrant for quality. The Institute closed in 1981 but has been a model for similar test plants in other countries (Möbelinstitutet 1976-1981, Andersson, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Sveriges provnings och forskningsinstitut SP.

<sup>21</sup> See further chapter V, section 4 of this work.

really serious turn might be a wait-and-see policy as expressed by Dahl (2001 p. 4):

‘The concept of sustainability has many other aspects than the purely environmental – for example social, ethical etc. But environmental concerns are a good place to start, as *they often bring other aspect with them.*<sup>22</sup>

Products, which are of good material quality and consequently lasts longer, will make people demand fewer products and teach them to appreciate sustainability also as *an immaterial quality*. Engholm and Michelsen (1999) are here referring to Papanek and explain this process as a dematerialisation: when you no longer have to be concerned about the material, you are open to other qualities, which otherwise might escape you. They are talking about these qualities in slightly un-defined terms like ‘the sent of the old armchair’ and ‘universal aesthetic and functional values’ (p.205). What Dahl as well as Engholm and Michelsen imply is that these immaterial qualities are difficult to pinpoint, that they might be personal or the secondary effect of other qualities [which are easier to arrive at] but that they in no way can be neglected. The two latter call Poul Henningsen, Arne Jacobsen and Hans J Wegner for ‘some of the greatest ecologists of our time’ (p. 205).

This section will analyse how this emphasis on material qualities has influenced the implementation of enduring lifestyles and the design and manufacture of durable objects. Special attention will be paid to how the interaction between material and immaterial qualities is addressed.

Sustaining means prolonging (Merriam-Webster, 2006) and a sustainable object should thus have qualities, which allows it to last longer. This is apparently not a complete description: the concept of sustainability goes much further and encompasses important actions aimed at prolonging the life of the globe not least as a quality habitat for humans: *to secure improved and continued human well-being human well-being long term* as it is formulated in chapter I. Contrary to this human approach and rather frequent statements concerning spiritual and other immaterial qualities, the resulting research and actions are, with a few exceptions, mainly directed to the material and techno-functional (Birkeland, 2002, Capra, 2003, Datschefski, 2001, Fry, 1999, 2003 a and b, 2004 Papanek, 1984 and 1995, Phillips, 2003, Williamson, Radford & Bennett, 2003). Without claiming to be complete the following list encompasses the most commonly referred actions:

- The recycling and subsequent re-use of material (also called re-materialisation)
- Waste management as opposed to waste disposal
- The re-use and/or the re-design of products
- Alternative use of products
- Eco-production; choice of material and manufacturing method for maximize longevity and minimize use of resources (energy, raw material etc.) and pollution.

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<sup>22</sup> Italics are not used in the original version.

- Eco-planning; to harmonize all the aspects above for a sustainable environment.
- The development and use of renewable sources of energy.
- Dematerialisation<sup>23</sup>: the replacement of a physical object with a non-physical, for example via the Internet.

The issue of re-using products or finding alternative use for them could certainly include consideration of immaterial qualities. However, with reference to the literature review, which is part of this research, there is little evidence to be found that these considerations have reached beyond theory. To exemplify: the link between immaterial qualities and the production of waste appears not to be extensively explored. Even though the approach to sustainable development has broadened into system thinking, the description of a sustainable object still seems to be incomplete (Walker, 2006).

The public, political and academic discourse on sustainable development and sustainability has since it emerged in the late 1960s resulted in scientific research and improved methods for application. Since the Rio Declaration of 1992, also politicians and corporate heads have at least verbally committed themselves to the cause (Schacht, 2001, Lenau & Bey, 2001, Jensen, 2004, Maccreeanor, 2005, Thackara, 2005). Generally, as well individuals as societies seem to have become more aware. Designers are asked to take their responsibility (Margolin, 1995, Kalman, 1999, Blincoe, 2001, 2004). In 'First things First', 33 leading graphic designers themselves called for more lasting and useful forms of communication (A Manifesto for 2000), which of course not only concerns graphic design as all design is about communication. However, as echoed by Blincoe (2001, 2004), progression is slow, not least concerning the impact of immaterial qualities and sustainability. This slowness has certainly a variety of causes, apart from polarised stands concerning where to put the emphasis: on a true scientific or a more philosophical approach (Fry 1999, Chapman 2005), there is also the issue of responsibility, which appears to be equally polarised: (i) politicians should impose rules and regulations on society, which would allow designers to work in line with their true convictions [which society does not allow them today] (Christensen 2006), (ii) designers [and their clients] should go from 'Designing For to Designing With' (Thackara, 2005, p. 220). The discussion involving this Top-Down versus Down-Up approach is opened already in chapter I of this work focusing on *anthropocentrism*: obstacle or tool, and continues throughout. Maccreeanor (2005) brings to the fore that an additional cause for this slowness is that the concept [of sustainability] has been 'hi-jacked for other means' (p. 98).

'In the public discussion there are endless definitions of the term which has in fact become something of a catchphrase, used by every politician, urban planner, regeneration advisor and ecologically minded civil servant alike. Overused, the word is beginning to lose its dictionary meaning: to maintain, to be able to continue or last for a long time.' (p. 98)

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<sup>23</sup> De-materialisation is often used in the meaning of replacing a material product with an immaterial (Fry, 2004). It is here important to note that the term *immaterial quality*, which is used throughout this work, denotes *the immaterial in the material*.

The circumstances, which Maccreanor refers to contribute undoubtedly to the lack of consensus and the tardiness, involved. Moreover, according to Hill (2002), another cause is capitalistic logic: sustainability is counteracted by forces – or hampered by obstacles – built into the market economy:

1. Products are intentionally manufactured to last a limited time. This might comprise quality of material as well as method of manufacture.
2. Products are made of materials that do not necessarily age well: aesthetically and/or physically. This choice of materials might be intended; to keep down cost of manufacture for reasons of profit and/or consumer price<sup>24</sup>, or unintentional; due to a lack of experience and knowledge.
3. Point 2 is relevant also for buildings.
4. Technology and style fascination. Every technologically improved product or product with a notably changed style is *the new* often making waste of *the old* as the latter seems dated.

A more superficial analysis of these points implies that these obstacles can be viewed as solely material. After a more thorough analysis another picture emerges, showing also the immaterial obstacles: even if an object breaks due to low quality material, it may theoretically have other characteristics, which make it timeless or even if of excellent material quality it might be disposed of long before it breaks. The introduction of *the new* would not automatically turn *the old* into waste. Again the latter might theoretically still be preferred for immaterial reasons and the former turned into waste. These very straightforward examples illustrate the reason behind the debate introduced by Blincoe (2001, 2004) and others. This debate has perhaps been misinterpreted as trying to bring into evidence that sustainability is in fact an immaterial quality as well. Already Papanek (1971, 1995) created a certain awareness concerning this issue. What seems still to be missing is an acceptance that it works also beyond the personal level and that it can be addressed.

#### 2:1:1 AN ENLARGED NOTION OF SUSTAINABILITY

If immaterial sustainability is accepted as something which might also be achieved on a general level this might offer rather easy ways to counterbalance the overall effects of the forces (numbers within parenthesis) described above: (1) Products, which stay relevant even if they do not last long physically, might create a consumer demand on the condition of improved material quality. This does not necessarily mean a higher price as raising demand improves the profit margin and better quality, in the case of durables, keeps after-sales service at a minimum. (2 and 3) Products of this kind might likewise trigger rethinking on the level of material: How to make the material age better. Authentics, the German home-ware producer, has had great commercial success with its 'simple' objects in frosted plastic. The Stockholm Council decided to give a special colour finish<sup>25</sup> to *Svampen*, a much-maligned shelter at one of the city's most prominent squares, Stureplan. *Svampen* had for years been the victim of graffiti and other damage,

<sup>24</sup> An interesting example on the issue of 'cheap copies' was described by Liz Farrelly in Blueprint. Many of these copies are today better than the original version. Not only cheaper, but made of a material, which is more fit for purpose, making it just as aesthetically pleasing, easier to use and safer!

<sup>25</sup> *Svampen* is a much maligned shelter/meeting place, which later to general acclaim was painted in accordance with the holistic Steiner school. *Svampen* means The Mushroom.



which now stopped. (4) Is the commercial value of *the new* exaggerated? Is there reason for this fascination to be revised?

Even if this immaterial side of sustainability has been much less explored, it does not mean that there is no existing awareness, as has already been pointed out. However, the issue has been addressed using varying connotations and formulations.

Hill (2002) referring to Heidegger, introduces as already mentioned the notion of 'care' (pp. 44-45). 'Care' is the support a product offers its users, its contribution to well-being, which might be material, keeping the body warm, but also immaterial e.g. conforming an identity. Techno-addiction has, according to Hill, become a cultural force, undermining calls for unnecessary techno-addition. Only the object with the latest technologies 'cares' for you – in a cultural sense.<sup>26</sup>

Papanek (1971, 1995), forerunner when it comes to the creation of a sustainable agenda for product design, was almost from the onset calling not only for the physical sustainability of objects but also for sustainability on the *spiritual level*. How he defines this term is not evident though.

'We sift through the history of designed objects. ... We will find much that enchants us ... in order to extract the essence from these objects; we must examine them against the cultural and social matrix from which they developed. When we do so, we find that all of them are related to spiritual values in some sense. ... I firmly believe that it is the intent of the designer as well as the intended use of the designed object that can yield spiritual value.'

This quote is from "The Green Imperative" (pp. 51-53). This book was written in 1995, 24 years after 'Design for the Real World'. This paragraph is only one of several passages in this book, which tells us that Papanek was aware of the need for an expansion of the notion of sustainability although he never seems to have explored this thread more pragmatically.

Andrea Branzi, more known for his critic and opposition to the rationalist movement as well as the mainstream and his exploiting of the post-modern, states the same year, 1995, that 'Such is design in a society which demands objects able to enter into and maintain relationships with their users, not only on the technical and functional level, but also on the psychological, symbolic and poetic level.' (Burkhardt & Morozzi, p. 19)

Walker (2003) calls the prevailing vision for sustainable development 'stultifyingly prosaic' (p. 8). According to him, it does not develop ideas concerning the inner person, which is necessary if sustainable development is to be other than a myth. He names the alternative to a myth a narrative, which would need a different profoundness including values and beliefs balancing the current analytical approach. Developing this further (2004) he classifies enduring objects into three categories: Functional, Social/Positional and Inspirational/Spiritual. Enduring functional objects are often serving quite basic needs (Maslow, 1970) while social and positional aspects when added to the functional often are creating products, which show little regard to sustainable practices. As Walker sees it, this happens when the inspirational and the spiritual is allowed to influence the design of the object. Religious objects do often combine these characteristics [he

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<sup>26</sup> Hill's arguments will be further considered in section 3:1

exemplifies with prayer-beads] but even if marginal products they may still serve as a source for knowledge how to arrive at sustainable product solutions. Realising that all choices would be subjective, he challenges what probably is current belief by naming Philippe Starck's 'Juicy Salif' an object, which may be classified into all three categories above: it works, even if not perfectly, it is surely positional but also pleasingly sculptural and rather humoristic.

The 'Juicy Salif' was according to Starck himself (Morgan, 1998) never meant to be a good lemon squeezer, but rather something inspiring a conversation without being offensive. Accused of being too commercial he introduced the concept of non-design, anonymous design, which would make the designer disappear. One resulting product, the Miss Sissi lamp, is by Starck regarded as 'totally reactionary' (p. 15) but became a true reference point and is mentioned as the most copied and imitated lamp in the world (Morgan, 1998).

Unknowingly Starck himself is thus supporting Walker's arguments on how to learn about what makes up a sustainable product.

## 2:1:2 ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABILITY FROM AN ARCHITECTURAL POINT OF VIEW

If the sustainability of products, at least in a broader and more popular sense, has focused on materials and other resources (Datschefski, 2001, Birkeland, 2002) the discourse and debate on how to develop a sustainable architecture presents a slightly broader view where the immaterial side is considered in varying ways even if not always consistently. Storey (2002) talks about 'user satisfaction' (p.48), which is exemplified by buildings being individualised and thus having their own look. However, these buildings are at the same time allowing personalisation by the user, which permits him/her to take control. He also mentions 'adaptability to many uses' (p.48): less specialised than all the modern buildings we have become used to. Phillips' (2003) approach to sustainable architecture covers issues ranging from regulations to aesthetics. Her considerations on the aesthetic are quite philosophic and conclude her work in a way, which serves as a significant frame. Also a philosopher like the French Bachelard (1994) argues that space without poetics is un-inspirational and forgettable. De Botton (2006) brings to the fore and emphasises, like Nouvel, that it is not enough for a building to be harmonious in itself, it has to be contextual not only in space but also in culture and mirror its total surroundings. This does, according to de Botton, not mean that we should go on reproducing culturally acknowledged styles but build on a cultural foundation, not least in an effort to train the senses of people and facilitate adjustment between architecture and humanity.

Though the debate continues, it appears to lack consistency, which of course makes it difficult to follow: there is abundance of threads even if some appear to be fairly evident: development, innovation and the seeking of an identity [of a place but also of an architect] are regarded as opposed to conservation and renovation. Maccreeanor (2005) heads his article 'The sustainable city is the adaptable city' (p. 98) and continues to argue that timelessness promises 'the return of a reality that was in it an abstract ideal' (p. 102). He therefore argues that timelessness and nostalgia cannot be separated and that nostalgia is a difficult word to link to architecture: 'implying a meaningless adoption of seemingly "complete" images from past architectures' (p. 103). His critique concerns more exactly the prevailing emphasis on the overall concept of a building to the cost of the details. Though equating 'the desired sense of timelessness' with material

quality, he claims in an earlier sentence that timelessness is about ‘a language that talks about a shared experience’ (p. 102) and also later argues that ‘a sense of detail implies a *cared for*<sup>27</sup> building’ (p.103).

A focus on the overall concept has also become apparent in Sweden, since the 1930s known for its progressive views on architecture and living. According to several younger architects, Sweden has reached the point where there is nothing new to be seen in the built environment. Thomas Sandell, a well-known and respected young architect and one of the authors of an article debating this issue, argues that Stockholm needs exciting buildings, representing *new technology* (2003). He exemplifies his argument with Ghery’s buildings and Utzon’s Sydney Opera among others and criticises Swedish architecture of recent decades for a reproduction of styles. Swedish decision-makers are hesitating, remembering the backlash from *modern architecture* as it developed in the 1960s after its initial success (Lavelid, 2003). Sandell does not separate housing from public buildings and, surprisingly, makes no distinction between *rework* and *reproduce* in his reasoning. This issue is very central in much of the discourse on sustainable architecture (for example Williamson, Radford & Bennetts, 2003). Sandell and his co-debater Britton, an experienced marketer, do not offer any alternatives but the *new* and argue about the lack of *exciting modern buildings*, while criticising developers and architects for mimicry.

This last example gives reason to believe that lack of preciseness in communication, creates polarised situations and reduces the meaning of *sustaining* so that it is only attached to the actual object and not to the underlying experience and knowledge: material versus immaterial. Totally lacking in this debate and according to Nouvel (2005) only to often also in real life is the issue of architecture and place. Rather than enhancing and developing a place, much architecture is ‘violating’ and ‘banalizing’ them. Norman Foster, in a citation from 1999, says ‘.. that architects always have been on the cutting edge of technology and you can’t separate technology from the humanistic and spiritual content of the building’ (Williamson, T., Radford, A. & Bennetts, H., 2003 p. 31). According to Nouvel, this is not enough. Even a building of this character may seem dislocated, what he calls ‘dropped down on the landscape.’ Nouvel as Bachelard (1994) regards the ‘poetry’ of a place as something more than a philosophic idea: it is the result of a holistic approach considering everything a building will replace and what will remain to ‘create a vibration’ in the human beings affected by this building. Not least ‘to anticipate the weathering of time, patina, materials that change, that age with character: to work with imperfection as a revelation of the limits of the accessible’.<sup>28</sup>

Architects and designers would consequently do better to explain the difference between historicism, or rather *presentism* (an indiscriminating use of the old in new settings) and continuity, (here meaning: combining old and new knowledge and experience with new technology). Nouvel is doing exactly this: arguing about continuity, not only concerning the material, but the immaterial. He also warns against the generic, the repetitive, which sometimes is pursued with allusion to culture.

One might guess, that additional insight presented with relevant arguments to decision makers would make them less prone to go for the *safe* polar category:

<sup>27</sup> Italics are not applied in the original version.

<sup>28</sup> All quotes assigned to Nouvel are from the ‘Louisiana Manifest’ poster.

the reproduction. There is again reason to believe that to decide for this solution is a reaction to the alienation created by much *modern architecture* or at least how the theory was applied. In 1978 Alexander wrote 'The Timeless Way of Building', the first of a well-known trilogy. His arguments are based on a conviction that the only way to timelessness starts within you, evolving from a 'pattern language' acquired through culture. This language is not, according to Alexander, to be seen as 'a formula', it is a way to understand, 'to release the fundamental order which is native to us', how to combine new technology to create an 'ageless character' (p. 53). This fundamental belief in that which stems from the nature of every human being, is by Williamson, Radford & Bennetts (2003) illustrated by presenting three dimensions of architectural sustainability; Natural, Cultural, Technical. The authors exemplify the cultural dimension with The Mosque at New Gurna in Egypt (realised 1945), and introduce the term *universal approach* in a sense different from what we have learnt from the modernist movement, or rather as a result of it. Universal means here *what humans have in common* rather than *what goes everywhere*. The result of these two ways of thinking might at times coincide but the underlying belief is quite different. The latter meant [in the mouth of the modernists] devoid of ornamentation, whilst the former, tries to find a deeper universality.

The material dimension is further explored in section 3:1 of this chapter through the examination of the notions of *to sustain* and *to waste*: what makes us negligee sustaining and prefer to waste? This analysis is followed by an account of a number of *approaches to the concept of sustainability*. These are the result of re-arranging existing debate and knowledge stemming from the actual and adjoining subject areas. The physical perspective is for reasons reported above dominating this account, which does not mean that awareness about other aspects is lacking.

## 2:2 The Cultural

Classical and eternal are sometimes used as synonyms for timeless and are all denominations with apparent reference to time. From a cultural point of view, there are two defining ways of looking at time: linear and circular. In most western or western inspired cultures, time is linear; what lies behind and what is in front of us. This in turn has resulted in a semantic where forward is offensive and positive, whilst back is defensive and negative and where new is linked to forward and old to back. There are no apparent loops in linear time but it might still be regarded as a means of transporting experience, identity and knowledge along (Osborne, 1995, Negus & Pickering, 2004). Ends never meet under linear conditions, which applied to time means that when situations reoccur they are not routinely challenged with earlier experiences (Kwinter, 2001). This is exactly what creates the difference between a linear and circular understanding of time. The agricultural part of western societies might serve as one example of a culture embracing a circular view as it is easily recognised by most and allows for circular time to be understood in its context (Ábalos, 2001).

### 2:2:1 DEFINED BY CULTURE.

These types of societies are rarely called timeless even if popularly regarded a historically rooted and stable. Negative associations to a circular time are according to Maffesoli (1998) caused by the fear of decadence promoted by

the conviction that 'life always starts over again' (p. 104). On the contrary, he argues, the value of the cycle lies in presentism, the realisation that past, present and future constitutes a whole, are unified, and give structure to any society.

Is it thus correct to conclude that traditions are not significant for timelessness? Returning to Maccreanor (2005), timelessness and nostalgia are inevitably connected. He speaks about nostalgia 'as complete images of the past' (p. 103) without any reference to tradition. To differentiate between timelessness and nostalgia is to balance the present and the past as if these temporalities exist simultaneously. It is not uncommon to find traditions interpreted as habits and traditional consequently as habitual or usual<sup>29</sup>. Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2006) does not even list *habit* or *habitual* either in the dictionary or in the thesaurus for tradition and traditional but states 'heritage' and 'inherited' as first hand synonyms<sup>30</sup>. In the introduction to this work a *timeless object was defined as: retaining its significance over time in changing human contexts*. Over time indicates that the object brings relevant characteristics along. Maccreanor discusses timelessness as *shared experience*, in which he includes *shared memories* and '*ordinariness*' (p. 102). Habits are personal practices, which may be shared be others but are most commonly not. They may, according to Campbell (1993), last maximum a lifespan but also be limited to only weeks: covering for example a period of illness. They are thus not necessarily stable and are rarely transferred from person to person. Rose (1993) speaks about 'social habits', which then are not personal but have developed as a result of collective consciousness, induced not least by 'images of lifestyle circulated by mass media' (p. 302). However, fact remains: what seems relevant today may not work well tomorrow. Traditions and habits are as follows rather antonyms than synonyms: the first are inherited exactly because they seem relevant over time while the other ought to change more or less constantly as they easily lose their relevance (Bastick, 2003).

This confusion regarding traditions and habit might offer an explanation to the existing ambivalence, exemplified by Maffesoli as angst of decadence, concerning societies adhering to a circular time view: the balance between useful experience and habits of thought and behaviour, which due to reoccurrence of events prove resistant to change. Bastick (2003), referring to Comella (and Newton), argues that cultural influences risk inhibit creativity: external force is needed to make an object change direction. The French architect Nouvel (2005) voices, as already indicated, arguments of similar kind: cultural references might be applied to justify standpoints and block change. Being the celebrated architect of several buildings aiming at merging cultures, his point is worth considering.<sup>31</sup> Cultural references are then not be confused with what de Banon (2006), referred above, calls 'cultural foundation' or 'cultural contexts': references are more surface than content.

Does this explain why societies adhering to a circular understanding of time are more commonly called traditional rather than timeless? Language has obscured meanings, traditions have been interpreted as reinvented habits and the societies have been deemed historical rather than timeless. A conflict has thereby been created, which does not reflect reality. There are many more aspects to be

<sup>29</sup> One actual example being the thesaurus of Microsoft Word, XP, version 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Tradition comes from Latin and is derived from tradere: to hand over, and traditio: action of handing over.

<sup>31</sup> Institute Monde Arabe (1987), Quai Branly, museum for indigenous art (2006) to mention a few of his well-known projects.

considered if this question is to be wholly answered. The aim is certainly not to equate traditional with timeless but to evidence that the notion of tradition is as important as the notion of time for the understanding timelessness. What makes the deconstruction hazardous at this point is that *time* as well as *tradition* are mostly culturally defined notions. Cultural influences and references may, as pointed out above, inhibit as well as promote timelessness.

## 2:2:2 TIME AND TRADITION

Western culture has obviously endorsed a linear time vision and also an interpretation of tradition as habit. What is *habitual* will be further analysed in section 3:3 of this chapter. It is here sufficient to point out that there is general consensus that habits are to be broken if change is to occur and that the linear time vision has contributed to the unprecedented development seen in the western world over the last one and a half century. Mostly for the better even if an different picture emerges when these facts are analysed from the angle of meaning: a troubled view on how to use the past on the way forward. Is the past a burden (loaded with constraints) or an asset (rich in experiences)? This conceptual dilemma has also caused confusion regarding the distinction between *development* and *change*, which includes *new* and other priorities involved here. The concepts of *cultural waste* (Lash, 1998, 2003, Kwinter 2002) and of *knowledge waste* (Papanek 1995, Osborne 1995, Lash, 1993) are introduced here as a way to categorise the arguments of the referred authors and at the same time name the existing distinctions. None of their works are dealing exclusively with either type of *waste* neither is the term used to name anything but the material. The discourse would benefit from a deeper analysis on *how waste is produced* focusing on the extent to which cultural and knowledge waste cause the raise in material waste and thus counteracts sustainable development. Hill (2002) presents interesting thoughts on cultural forces and material waste, which are developed further in section 3:1, *To sustain or to waste*. His arguments provide direct links to what might be *wasted*, as the result of different interpretations of time and tradition. These aspects are consequently covered in the following sections 3:2, *Understanding time* and 3:3, *Being modern and breaking with traditions*.

Objects are related to different dimension of time as in an [imagined] grid further in section 3:2. Osborne's (1995) quest through philosophical approaches stimulates important rethinking concerning predominant views on time: eras versus processes. Lash's (1999) argumentation on Modernity and '*modernities*': fixed concepts or flows, presents a challenge to Giddens (1990, 1991) on Modernity and to Jameson (2002) on Post-modernity. The analysis of the notions of time and tradition includes also tracing the phenomena *classical* and *timeless* from antiquity to today. How have these survived Modernity: the break with the past and the common advice not to look back for solutions but start from zero not to obscure the view? What have the reproduction and mixing of styles during Post-modernity meant for the understanding of these phenomena: enhancement of content or setting of trends? Has this eclecticism distorted the idea of timelessness?



### 2:2:3 DETRADITIONALISATION

*Detraditionalisation* is frequently regarded as a pre-condition for modernisation.

‘One of the most powerful legacies of classical social thought is the idea that, with the development of modern societies, tradition gradually declines in significance and eventually ceases to play a meaningful role in the lives of individuals.’ (Heelas, 1993, quoting John Thompson, p. 2)

The importance of this process was further emphasised by the modern movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tradition and traditionalism became the overall denominations for *what had been* and for *guided by the past*, whilst they in effect originate from *action of handing over*, as explained earlier in this work. Traditions may be manifested as patterns of thought as well as artefacts, literature, art and music. Embracing detraditionalisation in the sense of denying the importance of handing over is thus a justification of certain attitudes: what is already manifested in material, cognitive or cultural dimensions, is ruled out as less important, even irrelevant.

Section 3:3 of this chapter addresses the influence of *modern* and *tradition* on the understanding of timelessness.

## 2:3 The cognitive

Cognition is a process of knowing, which includes both awareness and judgement. Basically it is the cognitive elements of perception, which create awareness. ‘Cognitive science is interdisciplinary and draws on many fields in developing theories about human perception, thinking and learning.’ (Merriam-Webster, 2006)

The importance of cognition in encounters between people and art has long been recognised. These encounters have never been reduced to a matter of judgment of forms but instead touch the fine interplay between perception and experience. Ranging from representatives of the Arts and Crafts movement to those of the Modern Movement, questions about what makes objects long-lasting have been subject to *easy solutions*: well crafted and inspired by nature [in Arts & Craft], functional and devoid of decoration [in the Modern Movement]. The latter also with the addition: liberated from the constraints of tradition. This is not to say that this is totally wrong, but when objects from these two periods are put side by side, the mere contradiction tells us that products with a lasting appeal might have all or none of these characteristics. It is no exaggeration to propose that their interpretations were not accurate, or at least not complete. As well the philosopher and educator Dewey (1929, 1934) as the designer/maker and academic Pye (1968, 1979) argue that experience and immediate perception determine the extent to which an object is really perceived, not just seen. This immediate perception has nothing to do with intellectuality but determines how the object gets stored in mind, if you have become aware. Even if perceived, not just seen, it might not leave any traces but be rapidly forgotten, as it has not managed to create awareness. Dewey’s view is that once an object is perceived, either if immediately forgotten or stored in mind, no new facts can change the emotions felt at the moment of perception. Only future experiences can change a person’s attitude towards that object. This means that an object may be perceived differently at



repeated encounter. The base for immediate perception has changed, even if perhaps unconsciously.

One of the major differences between Dewey and Pye concerns how they judge the artist's or designer's ability to understand why some objects are perceived and others are not, why some are appreciated or at least stored in mind and able to be purposely recalled.

According to Pye there is 'no guide to beauty appreciation' which is further 'a particular kind of experience which cannot be explained as the cause is still unknown' (1978, p. 100). This would grant him a place among the behaviourists, who dismissed the merit of trying to understand what was going on in the mind of the person when reacting (Sternberg, 1996). For his part, Dewey (1934), whom Sternberg refers to as a follower of functionalism<sup>32</sup>, introduced the notion of 'rhythm' as some kind of *principle* (not Dewey's term), which might be used when analysing how art is experienced at the moment of perception: 'It is reducing the raw materials of that experience to matter ordered through form' (p. 133). Rhythm is then the ordered variation of changes in these forms, as also changes in intensity give rise to opposing energies.<sup>33</sup> This could well be interpreted as art and design working on the level of *simplifying*; when matters are ordered in a certain rhythm, which releases energies, our immediate perception is facilitated. On the other hand, returning to Pye, what we see is not the world, as it actually exists, it is an incomplete analogue! One can only agree: if we were to understand matters just by seeing them, nuclear physics would have been *a piece of cake*!

The real difference between Dewey and Pye thus seems to be their respective appreciation of the unconscious. They both recognise the important role of this when emphasising immediate perception. Pye claims that judgement is a conscious act, even if it is grounded on unconscious experience. Dewey reasons that judgement might just as well be unconscious and furthermore change by new experience. From Pye's standpoint, a judgement regarding timelessness would thus only be done consciously, while Dewey opens for another interpretation: though resulting from processes in the mind, an experience of the timeless might be stored unconsciously.

### 2:3:1 THE SEPARATION OF THE BODY FROM THE MIND

This emphasis on conscious judgement is also to be seen within cognitive science. The aim to achieve scientific credibility has created a growing interest in observations and precise measurements and removed the issue of cognition and perception from its context to the laboratory. Numerous scientists are according to many scholars reluctant to accept other methodologies when developing theories about perception, thinking and learning (Bastick, 2003, Capra 2003, Gerdenryd, 2002, Lave 1988, Armstrong 1961). Advancing in the direction of laboratory testing seems to be a logic continuation along a path, which has long been trodden in the behavioural sciences: the separation of the body from the mind. Possibly as a consequence, the debate on form and function is still vital only with some

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<sup>32</sup> Functionalism focuses on the processes of the mind as opposed to e.g. structuralism, which focuses on the structures of the mind (Sternberg, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> According to Sternberg (1996) this is what today is called 'recognition by components (RBC)' or a 'bottom-up' approach, which explains form and pattern perception to a certain degree. When it comes to understand contexts a 'top-down processing' seem to provide a better explanation. (p. 152)

variation concerning the angles of approach: e.g. whether form includes meaning and interpretation or should be replaced by these (Krippendorf, 2003). The relation between these two issues, body - mind respectively form – function, will be analysed in more detail in section 3:3 of this chapter. Looking at body and mind separately necessarily prevents holistic thinking about human behaviour: the rational and intellectual in opposition to the emotional, the conscious in charge of the unconscious. This denial of a dialogue between the two entities of body and mind is still having an impact on the discourse on beauty and aesthetics. The body appears to have been assigned the role of the *woman* in history: as purely sensual, a disturbance and distortion of rational thinking and therefore to be isolated, sometimes put on a pedestal (philosophical), but often wasted as useless (political) (Utrio, 1984). Beauty has as a result emerged as the reflected, intellectually processed variety of the aesthetic: even if during the last fifty years seemingly becoming irrelevant, not least on the art scene (Rée, 2000, Bennett, 1996). The ambivalence regarding how to deal with the aesthetic is typically exemplified in the works of Immanuel Kant, to whom Rée as well as Bennett are referring.

Kant's distinction in *Critique of Judgement*<sup>34</sup> between the sensing of physical objects outside us and 'the beautiful play of sensations within' which he describes as 'music of colour and sound', is another proof of how *the bodily* was to be kept apart (Rée, 2000, p. 60). Gerdenryd (2002) points to yet another effect of this separation directly influencing the design process: the forgotten use of the mundane. Everyday experiences, reflected or un-reflected, should not without thought be de-valued in favour of scientific, or rather *scientific-like findings*. Lave (1988) puts it slightly differently when he argues that there is no polar category for everyday activity. This approach to the study of practice does not divide the construction of routine activity from the manufacture of change according to him.

This overview of the cognitive dimension of timelessness is made with the aim of validating the identification of notions for further exploration and also the perspectives, which ought to be applied: physical, philosophical and affective. A crucial step in the overall understanding of this phenomenon is to appreciate the process whereby objects enter and find a place in the mind of the beholder through perception. Perception involves immediate [non-reflective] reaction, which should not engage the intellect. Emotion is the antonym to intellect, but how well are they separated in real life? The belief in the superiority of rational thinking, beginning with Plato (Sternberg, 1996) and much later further emphasised by Descartes<sup>35</sup> is seriously put in doubt by Damasio (1994) through scientific experiments as opposed to philosophical contemplations. These experiments showed how emotions not only had significant impact on decision-making but a crucial role for all rational thinking and how we behave socially. Bastick (2003) has in this tradition elaborated the construct of intuition, emphasising the determining role of [unconscious and conscious] experience for the correctness of intuition.

The link between experience, perception, emotion and decision-making [here, aesthetic judgement] appears thus central for the understanding of timelessness.

<sup>34</sup> This famous work of Immanuel Kant was first published in 1781.

<sup>35</sup> Descartes proclaimed; I think therefore I am, in his writings from 1637.

### 3. Notions

#### 3.1. To sustain or to waste

The balance between the decision to sustain or to waste is vital for the creation of a sustainable environment (Birkeland, 2002). Waste is not a true antonym to sustain [which would be save] but the two notions represent as adjectives opposite approaches to resources: *wasting* is a non-method of getting rid of a resource while *sustaining* is a method of using it. Both are resulting in products but with the defining difference that *waste* needs more resources to be managed whilst the *sustained* is giving back resources through reuse<sup>36</sup>. Fry (1999) introduces the notion of ‘unconsumption’ or ‘unconsumed matters’ as a producer of waste and as ‘the overt driver of the narrative of un-sustainability, which opens up other ways of reading the familiar’. ... the recognition of negated use value, misformed and misplaced desires, expanded sign value ... and the irrationality of the status of economic growth.’ (p. 109).

Sustainable products are, as already mentioned, discussed mainly on the level of alternative use of resources: rethinking the use of materials, which includes how materials are produced, re-cycled, used alternatively and degraded (Fry, 1999). The concept of sustainable consumption addresses the use of resources from a human angle, focusing on how to create awareness about more sustainable lifestyles: to consume with the aim to minimize the amount and consider the type of material waste produced. Waste should as far as possible be linked to a method of using it, not only managing it (Carpa, 2002). McDonough and Braungart (2002) argue along the same lines when they say that ‘waste equals food’ and that it is merely the problematic wastes and nutrients, which ought to be removed from the current waste stream. Early rhetoric, including Life Cycle Assessment or Life Cycle Analysis (LCA), implied that not only waste but nature overall is a resource, which requires managerial control (Wood, 1997)

The concept of *sustainable buildings* is developed by Philipps (2003) into *sustainable places*, which also include an aesthetical dimension, so often absent in other works. She argues that the public has come to view environmental concerns as problems rather than possibilities and perhaps as a statement never uses the denomination waste, which no doubt is problem oriented. Her attitude becomes fairly evident through the following quote:

‘Consideration of the following questions provides part of the background for an aesthetic that is more appropriate to sustainability than to any style of architecture or landscape.’ (p. 174)

She indicates with this statement that there is a strong link between the aesthetic and the sustainable and continues to suggest that this has been little explored. The result is to be seen in buildings and dwellings, which lack ‘psychological comfort’ (p. 175) and are discarded instead of sustained. This is one good example of waste produced for immaterial reasons.

*Immaterial waste* is just like *the material dimension of timelessness* formally not relevant. The formulation *material waste* is likewise a peculiar construct. Waste has in effect no spiritual or incorporeal dimension. A correct way to express what is aimed at here is consequently: (i) *waste produced for*

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<sup>36</sup> This is not generally manifest as considerable resources sometimes are necessary for recycling and reuse (Birkeland, 2002).

*immaterial reasons*; spiritual, sensual or ideal, and (ii) *waste produced for material reasons*; out of tangible matters (Merriam-Webster, 2006). As suggested already in section 2:1 of this chapter, a comprehensive analysis of the notion of waste ought to take both these categories into consideration. Before exploring fashion as the production of waste, it is important to reflect on another possible category: waste produced for cultural reasons. Moreover, these reasons are often regarded as strong forces in their own right, but embodied in humans as part of their identity they are controlled by the need of belonging. Cultural reasons are thus transmitted through spirituality (Carpa, 2002).

The stand taken here is that these reasons assert influence on all types of waste production and it would therefore be meaningless to create a *cultural waste* category. Culture is made up of lived experiences, which already Dewey proposed have impact our behaviour without further reflection<sup>37</sup>.

### 3:1:1 WASTE PRODUCED BY FASHION<sup>38</sup>

***Sustainability as a trend:*** It does not take more than a swift browsing of popular magazines to learn that a number of companies have tried to make the most of their commitment to sustainability in publicity and marketing. Various designers and architects have notably joined them. Some of them experienced that they were too early to make the most of their endeavour but more often than not their time arrived. It became fashionable to think in terms of sustainability. On the consumer level, not only concerning buying environmentally friendly products (whatever that really means) and take waste to the recycling station (hoping that it will be recycled in the end) but to live in harmony with nature, physically and mentally. These latter influences will eventually reach the *high street* consumer and will not be reserved for the avant-garde for very long, argued Mattson in 2003. He and other trend-makers in the fashion industry gave at that time seminars and wrote articles on the growing importance of paying attention to the inner self and also to demand fair objects: fair to the producer and the user alike. Organic content but also organic forms became a re-vitalized as did almost everything else that appealed to the senses. Harmony and alternative movements were the two main directions presented by another trend-maker (Bond, 2003). *Soft* became close to a catchword, as did the phrase: *poetry in living*. It was recognised that human balance – even if extravagant and with focus on the outside - means a demand for something more than a style.

Not surprisingly, the home came into focus. The Design Museum in London ran ‘The Smithsons – The House of the Future to a House for Today’.<sup>39</sup> Two such disparate publications as ‘Wallpaper’ and ‘OM- The Observer Magazine’ carried simultaneously long articles (Withers, 2003 a & b) on how this architect couple developed English Modernism into ‘a thinking that embodies not just man’s physical but also spiritual needs’ (p. 70, b) The Smithsons’ ‘Solar Pavilion’, with its ‘nature inside’ approach and trademark reuse of the foundations of an old farmhouse, is discussed as something that might fulfil the current wish for a less stressful living in harmony with nature and without a constant urge to have *the new, the latest thing*.

<sup>37</sup> The issue of decision-making was addressed already in section 2:3 of this chapter and will be further discussed in chapter V.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Usage accepted by those who want to be up-to-date. Applies to any way of dressing, behaving, writing or performing that is favoured at any one time or place.’ (Merriam-Webster, 2006)

<sup>39</sup> December 2003 to February 2004

The incorporation of sustainability into the fashion vocabulary seemed thus with or without intention to have raised awareness about one aspect of timelessness in its search for ways to reduce stress and enhance balance in the way of living.

Fashion offered sustainability with a momentarily easy ride, which might have given the impression that the world finally has embraced sustainability as a way of living. However, there are instead signs of the public being overfed with sustainability issues and even that the issue of sustainable development has reached a state of certain fatigue also among students. There are voices calling for a critical stance and discussion on where design for sustainability finds itself today (Kolte, 2005)

It is difficult to decide whether emotional design and the design of pleasurable products have purposely been developed to contribute to sustainable design. The emergence and popularity of these two design directions coincided with the fashion forecasting referred to above (2002-2003). Norman published his book 'Emotional Design' in 2004. The limitation with emotional appeal, from a sustainability point of view, is that it is not necessarily long lasting. This is a claim made by a priori Dewey, who argues that a work of art may have different emotional appeal depending on in who's company it is experienced (1934). Furthermore, even if a product is taking care of you in the sense of giving you pleasure it does not necessarily mean that this will be for long. You might, in Hill's words (2002) 'succumb without even noticing' (p. 43). Cultural forces might be very strong and become so mentally integrated that we are guided without much reflection. Chapman (2005) emphasises in the same sense that even if emotions are aroused, they might fade or disintegrate quickly if they are not based in the authenticity of the object. Making decisions on the grounds of *what is good for me* is part of human ways of being, according to Hill. That is why we 'succumb without noticing', there is no mediation between perception and the senses. This urge 'to be better taken care of' (p. 44) is according to Hill driving the market economy. We are not discarding products to please the economic system but we are feeding it through our 'anthropocentric' perspective (p. 43); if something has no apparent utility to us or is not understood, it is no longer considered and thus turned into waste. A wedge is, according to Chapman, driven between the subject and the object in the lack of attachment.

From a sustainable development point of view, Hill's reasoning might initially appear very disappointing as it implies that it is almost impossible to make people contribute without providing them with anthropocentric incitements or massive education. When admitting the existence of a link between an anthropocentric perspective and what is regarded as authentic, the importance of understanding of human ways of being becomes evident. 'Objects that evolve slowly over time build up layers of narrative by reflecting traces of the user's invested care.' (Chapman, 2005, p. 134)

In a research project on sustainable consumption undertaken at the university of Calgary, interviewees taught the researchers that by detaching themselves from objects, they were more prone to accept the physical ageing of these (Marchand, 2004). Based on this information the researchers draw the possible conclusion that a strategy aimed at designs, which were more viable through time included products, which consumers did not bond with. Marchand refers to these as anonymous products and exemplifies with the Muji concept

among others.<sup>40</sup> Participants further informed the researchers that if they knew that a product adhered to broader ethical concerns, its aesthetic was enhanced. It became beautiful. Despite referring to sources suggesting certain general qualities as possible prerequisites for timelessness, she argues that the latter is ultimately subjective: sustainable development is enhanced if (i) products are designed without the aim of the user getting attached to it and (ii) when the aesthetic is reflected upon beyond the purely 'formal'<sup>41</sup>. She chooses to name this a 'sustainable aesthetic' (p. 126). This is then a concept, which presupposes reflection.

The first argument (i) is controversial. Personal attachment or a strong person-product relationship is increasingly seen as one important precondition for longevity (Mugge, Schoorman & Shifferstein, 2005, Redström, 2005). The logic behind this strand is not unlikely: if we are attached to an object we will go to more length to have it repaired or renovated before having it replaced. Marchand's suggestion presupposes a reflected awareness while proponents of the opposite view denounces the possibility of such a strategy and argues that a person-product relationship is based on emotions, which of course are un-reflected. These totally opposing views and resulting strategies reveals the complexity involved in timelessness as in sustainability.

The subject of the second argument (ii) is addressed by another Canadian research team, Findeli & Bousbaci (2005), when suggesting the inclusion of ethics in an expanded notion of the aesthetic. According to their design studio applications, respect to logic precedes respect to ethics in designer as well as user action. Seen as philosophic postures, logic and ethics form together with the aesthetic the *meta-aesthetic*. Viewed in a designer perspective, ethics is informed by ontology [the nature of things that have existence] whilst by anthropology [human centred] in a user perspective. This meta-aesthetic and 'the sustainable aesthetic' proposed by Marchand (2004) are both the result of reflection. Marchand does not discuss how to judge what is ethical but her argumentation manifests that the standards are set by current ecological research and international reports on working conditions in manufacturing countries. Findeli & Bousbaci emphasises the study of beings and being as essential for ethical decisions. Ethics are for them philosophical considerations whilst for Marchand rather the result of facts and figures. Facts and figures are prone to change and used as points of reference, they ought to be kept under observation not to risk counteracting longevity, whether this is called sustainability or timelessness. Human ways of being are, as argued earlier, less prone to change than the way we live. Ethical concerns based on today's factual situation, even if supported by science and figures, might well have lost relevance tomorrow and consequently in addition 'the sustainable aesthetic' defined by these concerns. Temporarily disregarding if a reflected aesthetic judgement is at all possible, the 'meta-aesthetic' appears to be a more reasonable concept as it is less influenced by the prevailing correctness.

Williamson, Radford & Bennetts (2003) also discuss the aesthetic aspect of sustainability as does Philipps (2003). They all argue that there are not enough evidence to judge if there is something like a special aesthetic for sustainability: Can something be appreciated just on the grounds that it is knowingly sustainable?

<sup>40</sup> Japanese owned retail chain producing and selling high-end products without brand image.

<sup>41</sup> 'Formal' is by this author, Marchand, apparently used in the sense of 'obvious': the un-reflected result of vision (plastic qualities) and experience.



Marchand concludes that this is possible. The time-period available to judge this is much too short to really tell us who is right<sup>42</sup>. There was a time not long ago when certain looks signalled the use of recycled or environmentally friendly material and became a way to display identity, which in many cases proved to be more of a fashion statement (Hill, 2002).

The notion of the aesthetic will be thoroughly explored in section 3:4 of this chapter.

In summary, the analysis in this section points to a risk that design for sustainability [or sustainable design] might contrary to common belief contribute to the production of waste due to (a) the fashion factor involved and (b) a disproportionate trust in the rational as opposed to the emotional human being.

On the other hand, applying Dewey's (1934) reasoning to this situation would indicate that repeated positive personal encounters with sustainability [process, practice or object] could result in an un-reflected and immediate reaction favouring the sustainable. However, this judgement would not be a product of intellectual processing and the direct result of education, information and campaigns.

### 3:1:2 MORE PERSPECTIVES ON WASTE

***Ideals might produce waste:*** The effects of modernism on the built environment are well known and have been argued at length. Certain main themes from these discussions prevail:

- These buildings were designed to allow for rational production, which at the time was not yet in place or tested on quality grounds. Many buildings have not weathered well.
- The basic ideas of modernist architecture were distorted. Several of those buildings, which were realised created alienation, not better living condition and had to be demolished or thoroughly rethought.

Mistakes in the built environment are costly to rectify. The decision to turn a building into waste requires more thought than to discard an object and the time span from reflection to replacement is long: demolition and construction are time consuming activities (Williamsson, Radford & Bennetts, 2003). The effects of mistakes consequently have a profound impact over a long period of time: with reminders of earlier mistakes constantly present, development is hampered by cautious thinking as was argued in section 2:1:2 of this chapter. Reproduction, re-work or renovation stands out as safe options. Are they automatically serving sustainability? Alexander's (1979) notion of 'the pattern language' concerns the fundamental elements of a building, which have already been discussed (section 2:1:2 of this chapter). A building might have existed for a long time due to reasons other than it having the right 'pattern language': it might be about resources or it being very solidly built. Using it as a model for reproduction on the ground of it being old would be wrong. On the other hand, a very contemporary building could have the right 'pattern language' and be worth a re-work. Even if [compared to

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<sup>42</sup> A Swedish paper, which was manufactured in a 100% closed system and initially without the glossy surface treatment was introduced in the UK in the late 1990<sup>s</sup>. Art directors and printers were not keen on this environmentally friendly paper until it came with the glossy surface, and they then did not ask how (it was by a pressure method, not with chemicals). Re-thinking on the ground of sustainability was not on the agenda – at that time (the author was part of project).



modernism] architectural ideals have changed and material quality has improved this does not in itself warrant sustainability. Getting the language right does not necessarily result in the most striking buildings, according to Alexander. These are often the ones that get the headlines in our mediated society and therefore inspire architects and students alike.

***Ambitions might produce waste:*** If yesterday it was the ideals of modernism, which counteracted sustainable architecture, it appears thus today to be the ambition of contemporary architects to create buildings, which stand out. Is the idea of using a 'pattern language' still relevant or has it become obsolete? Sandell (2003) complains in the interview referred to in section 2:1:2 of this chapter about 'the lack of exiting new buildings'.

'I would like to hold an umbrella over the students to shield them from all the short-lived trends, which seem to fall on them like rain' says Jan Gezelius, one of Sweden's most renowned architects and teachers in architecture (Andersson, 2003). 'Buildings are for 200 years, not for 10'. He wants to raise the general life expectancy of building by proclaiming 'freedom within tradition'. The practice of this freedom, argues Gezelius, you have to turn to art history, archaeology and history rather than to architecture magazines. He has also looked in retrospect to architects, whose buildings he encountered very early in his life, impressions which have established traces in his works ever since. This way to learn a 'pattern language' seems less poetic than Alexander's but appears in essence to be the same. First perceptions are notably very strong. According to Gezelius, these were mainly made at a time when he had little architectural experiences. They have apparently retained an important role as catalysts when years of experience have been added (Janson, 1998).

***Ways of thinking might produce waste:*** Referring to ideals and ambitions, it is evident that waste is already produced during the process of designing a building or an object, despite eventual regard to material sustainability. Designers and architects are of course capable of rethinking. The problem seems to be the lack of coinciding messages in what direction to rethink, not least concerning what is guiding human behaviour.

Even if there has been a radical change on the issue of socio-biology over recent decades [in 1978 Edward Wilson, a prime scientist on the subject, was ridiculed and insulted when presenting his theories] there is still a very strong belief in the dominating impact of the social in forming human behaviour (Uddenberg 1998). This belief might to a certain extent have hampered development in different areas. The emphasis has been on how to educate and inform us about a desired behaviour: to tackle us, rather than to work with us. Sociology versus anthropology and ontology: human ways of living versus human ways of being. The latter have to be known prior to trying to change the former. Uddenberg argues that the prevailing acceptance of the strand that all humans are born equal is without doubt one social construct, which has caused important misconceptions. These have had far-reaching effects, one example being that human ways of living has been kept in focus as the primary source of knowledge about human behaviour. This has and still is informing among others, designers and architects.

IKEA's BoKlok (Live Wisely) project, referred to by Ola Nylander (2002) is a straightforward and interesting, if slightly superficial example of the above. It is not a scientific experiment but the result of consumer participation in a housing project. Future residents were asked to express what they regard as essential for

making them feel happy in their home and its close environment: what they actually desire. Examples such as flagpoles, hedges, cherry trees and wooden gates were as a result included in the building scheme. These desires are, according to Nylander, likely to be metaphors and ought to have been further explored as to find out what they really express. This would have raised the chances to arrive at a quality of living, which would offer long-term contentment. What you cannot express, you can normally sense very quickly when confronted with it. Nylander's doctoral thesis on architecture and living concludes: interviews bring into evidence that people can immediately tell when entering an apartment or a house if they would like to live there or not. They are also able to express why, when experiencing the place physically, but not beforehand. Their explanations concern mainly visual impressions as opposed to details. These types of studies enable us to learn about otherwise un-measurable architectural characteristics, which are of crucial importance for the creation of sustainable places for living.

Phillips argues along the same lines and she looks far back to illustrate that these are by no way new findings. She draws on Alberti, who wrote on architecture in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century (2003):

'It is remarkable how some natural instinct allows each of us, learned and ignorant alike, to sense immediately what is right or wrong in the execution and design of a work. It is precisely with regard to such matters that sight shows itself the keenest of all senses.' (p. 176)

Following this statement Alberti also explains:  
'... whereas all may sense the visually inappropriate, it is only the few who have the ability to correct this.' (p. 176)

One immediate interpretation of this statement is that when an artefact does not appeal to us sensually we reject it, as most of us do not know how to change it for the better. Is a rejected object immediately turned into waste or is the feeling of something being 'visually inappropriate', very personal, meaning that someone else will feel that it is right? According to Nylander, negative attitudes expressed towards one apartment in a certain block, seldom turned out to be held by only a few.

Williamsson, Radford & Bennetts (2003) and Birkeland (2002) take the sensual or rather the affective side into their system approach. The former introduce the notion of 'beautiful acts'. Drawing on Kant, they argue about the need for a diversity and richness of solutions, which include 'care and joy': create among producers and users alike a feeling that we are contributing to something that will be 'worthy of enduring well over time' (p. 61)

The overall aim for these authors is nevertheless to discuss environmental concern and the role of humans. When nature and humans are looked at as being on equal terms, the concern is regarded as deep and called 'ecocentric'. Less concern is expressed through an 'anthropocentric' strand: when human terms are ruling. Hill (2002) uses the same terminology when explaining the search for 'products caring for you'. Drawing on what is already discussed above, it is unlikely that we, as individuals, will *initially* act other than anthropocentrically. An immediate human reaction is to look after own needs and we may act 'ecocentrically' only as an effect of learning and reflection. Alexander, who does not use the relatively new term 'anthropocentric', claims that what is made by

humans and has stood the test of time, is what works with nature and not against it. Nature is the strongest part. This would mean that when studying what has worked over time on human terms (the anthropocentric) we will arrive at what will still work today and therefore be a model for what works with humans and nature on equal terms, the 'ecocentric'. The ideal would thus be attained by judging where the 'anthropocentric' and 'ecocentric' meet.

The Norwegian architecture practice, Snøhetta, who are behind the Alexandria Library in Egypt, have gained the reputation of having 'an elemental empathy with their surroundings', which is explained as 'their designs' connection with the earth'. This, writes Dunn (2004), is what makes 'the vastly overused' word timelessness suitable to describe the quality of their buildings: connection with the earth has replaced 'anything so superficial as styling' (p. 51). One factor defining timelessness should thus be regard to context, which was also argued by Nouvel (2005) when he criticises dominant architecture for expressing 'we do not need context'. This gives another reasons to reconsider the anthropocentric: instead of representing a shallow level of awareness it might be a source of knowledge: though 'connection with earth' might be an example of an eco-centric approach, it is the anthropocentric, that the building does not obstruct the surroundings in the human sense, which conserves it.

#### SUMMARISING COMMENTS

In this section we have explored how waste is produced and why this knowledge is important not only to enhance sustainable consumption but for the understanding of timelessness. The initial suggestion was that waste in its material form has other than physical causes: wasted artefacts may well be technically functioning, little worn and in one piece. Not to claim that this is a new revelation but that it needs to be further explored to understand its causes and not taken as an inevitable result of the capitalistic system (Hill, 2002). In the cultural dimension waste seems to a large extent to result from 'techno-addiction' and fashion, whilst in the cognitive dimension waste is produced by rejection following an immediate visual impression. The discourse on sustainability has addressed these issues but there appears to be little consensus concerning the best approach to the problem. The two most salient proposals are repeated below and they are apparently not substantiated by the same evidence:

- anonymous designs ought to be developed further as they actively contribute to detachment between object and user. If the user has little or no attachment to the object, it's ageing or becoming un-fashionable matters less.
- emphasis on the product-user relationship. If this is strengthened the user is less inclined to part with the object and takes better care of it.

These proposals result in totally different design strategies, but there is one important common denominator: the idea of timelessness being mainly a personal issue.

Continued exploration also revealed that ideals and ambitions are producing waste, whilst an object being in fashion does not warrant it not being replaced. This strengthened the belief that the probable cause for the production of a considerable amount of waste is to be found in *ways of thinking*.

Waste is analysed in all three dimensions even if the cognitive dimension initially had a more vague presence. Cognition<sup>43</sup> is about both reflected and un-reflected action and it is the latter, which apparently has not found a defined place in the discourse on sustainable consumption, where emphasis still very much is on the rational human. However, the analysis has indicated that a link between the object and nature is favouring the immediate [un-reflected] visual impression, which is a precondition for the object not to be rejected. Un-reflected action is often referred to as human ways of being. Alexander proposes that the study of patterns of surviving, or re-occurring, ways of living is a way to learn more about human ways of being. Gezelius' study as it is described, is a practical example of Alexander's proposal: to recollect long stored images of architecture and design and to review them from a multidisciplinary perspective.

The analysis of the notion of waste has thus given important directions for further exploration timelessness: the cognitive dimension ought to be given additional attention with special focus on human ways of being.

### 3:2 Understanding time

The complexity of the everyday denomination *time* becomes evident immediately when timelessness is deconstructed: analysed as a notion, time is undoubtedly ambiguous.

References to time may well range from the pragmatic, clock-time or mechanical time, to the more philosophical, lived-time or experienced time. These references are normally made without deeper thought, even if the time our watches are showing have a tendency to overrule how we experience time. Clock-time illustrated by the expression 'you cannot set the clock back' seems to allude to Aristotle's understanding of time as external and irreversible whilst lived-time makes us associate with the subjective and St. Augustine's reflections on 'lived' moments (Wood, 1996, 1997). References to time are often habitual and made without deeper thought. Time viewed as something ethereal, which is flying away from us and cannot be caught, is just as normal as viewing time as a schedule of activities. The problem begins when we want to relate time to other relevant concepts. Most dictionaries use more than one page or several columns for their definitions.

It comes therefore as no surprise to learn that such a reputable designer and educator as Papanek seemed to avoid time-related denominations, including *traditions* and *traditional* as well as *now* and *new* in his first book, 'Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change' (1971). Papanek brought sustainable design onto the agenda and his is one of the most read sources on the subject. In the closing sentences of his book 'The Green Imperative' (1995), he reflects on permanence through the continuity of craftsmanship. In an apparent snub to modernism, he introduces the term 'presentism', coined by Kirkpatrick Sale (p. 52), to describe what we are doing when judging the past from our *own* time and culture. He also introduces two fresh concepts (i) 'the spiritual in design', the fulfilment of form not only through function but also through the spiritual values that are embedded in culture and (ii) 'the new aesthetics', which include respect of the environment<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Cognitive *processes* are referring to reflected thoughts.

<sup>44</sup> 'the sustainable aesthetic' and 'the meta- aesthetic' discussed in section 3:1 of this chapter are likely inspired by Papanek's 'the new aesthetics'.

Kwinter (2002) argues that already Nietzsche traced back the problem of *presentism* to the classical 'opposition of terms' like subject/object and space/time. He draws a three dimensional picture by adding movement to the axis of tradition and rationality (space is a static background to the moving time). The result is a perspective, in which an object or a sign, once taken out of its original setting, loses its absolute meaning and has to be redefined as it flows along 'the chaotic world of force' (p. 40). Its meaning is, according to Kwinter, replaced by affectivity; the capacity to bear, transmit but also to block and turn inwards. A fusion of the standpoints of Papanek and Kwinter respectively, would indicate that an object with no or a blocked affective capacity can either only be judged by its absolute meaning, which might be nonsense today or be judged by 'presentism', applying values from now to history. This would probably make the object look irrelevant. An object with blocked affective capacity would thus be the antonym to the timeless object.

The notion of history as dynamic is also central for Osborne (1995). He creates almost the equivalent of a *tale* with his comprehensive references to several of the most important philosophers of our time: Gadamer, Ricoeur, Kosseleck and Benjamin. Guided by them he explores *time*: 'the historical, new time, now time, Modernity, eternity, timelessness, everyday, tradition, Avant-Garde, classical and infinity'. Osborne's aim is not to define or explain but to take us through contrasting positions. During *this quest* he gradually leaves behind his apprehension of history as a series of temporal concepts in favour of history as an ongoing process, where the temporal concepts are invented by man rather than grounded in reality.

When Papanek's (1995) notion of 'permanence through continuity' is put beside Osborne's defence of 'historical totalisation', there is a distinct accord. They are both pointing to the negative side of *periodisation* as a means of narrowing the scope and stress the importance of a certain time as compared to time as an ongoing process. The correctness of periodisation has rarely been questioned but might be explained by a human urge to orientate in time as in space. Papanek also suggests that continuity is hampered by periodisation as it induces focus on the lifespan of the physical product and overlooks the way it is produced. Osborne, drawing on Ricoeur, also implies that there are negative effects on real improvements in society when traditionality is regarded as a way of preserving rather than of gaining experience. Kwinter (2001), citing Nietzsche as his prime source of argument, is likewise critiquing 'transcendence', that things are grounded in meaning and move along in this form. He interestingly notes that there is a dynamic form of meaning, events, which are not grounded and are carried by the affective capacity of the object. All other forms of meaning are re-introduced in the process of time.

Altogether these works draw a picture of development over time, which is approaching evolutionary thinking. That is, understanding Kwinter, not hostile to technology, but rather an assertion of the difference between what happens in a static and dynamic system respectively. The latter is evolutionary as it has a built in force. He exemplifies this with the 'free crystal growth' of snow, which constantly evolves as opposed to 'the ice cube', which stays exactly in its initial form, constrained by rigidity (p. 27-28). The interaction between evolution and development is increasingly used to explain how dynamic, flow and continuity are achieved.

These views on the relation between time and object are in opposition both to the popular belief and the current definition of what characterises a culture of innovation and one of minimal change. They also contradict many of the *mantras* of the Modern Movement, not least the break with traditions (see further section 3:3 of this chapter). A culture of innovation is in popular terms one where you are not tied to existing product solutions and can approach the problem, or rather the future, with a non-biased mind. A culture of minimal change is, on the other hand, often defined as conservative and even hostile to technology. These definitions propose that innovation and change as such mean development, from which follows that timelessness means stagnation. A potent thread in Papanek's (1995) work is his conviction that also minimal change, not only innovations, might lead to great improvements and development.

This reasoning of Osborne, Kwinter and Papanek stimulates rethinking on (i) ways in which objects relate *to a time* and *to time* and (ii) preconditions for a culture of development.

Consideration of the perspectives of time discussed above provides background to an important question: Is there a tendency to politicise time?

The ultimate result of periodisation is eras, which can be defined to have a beginning and an end. This definition facilitates attribution of thoughts, acts and objects to individuals connected to this era. Flows and continuity have to be carefully governed not to lose their force or their dynamic. This 'historical totalisation' makes it less obvious for politicians and other decision-makers to have certain *deeds* attributed to them rather than to multiple causes within cultures.

### 3:2:1 TIME AS AN ERA

There is an overwhelming amount of work done on 'Modernity'<sup>45</sup>, modernity and modernism; in relation to history and politics, to philosophy, sociology and art, finally and not least in architecture and design.

Referring to Koselleck, Osborne (1995) notes that almost irrespective of context, modernism is described as 'an irreversible break with the past' (p. 9). This break stands in sharp contrast to the arguments on flows and continuity above but has according to Osborn and others been widely accepted. The content of modernist reasoning is that objects must either be ancient or modern. Osborne comes up with a reminder: What is then classical? He refers to Gadamer who argues that the present serves as a mediator between the past and the future. In this process, the classical is what resists historical criticism because its historical 'dominion' (area of validity) precedes all 'historical reflection and continues through it' (p. 129). The coherence between these arguments and Kwinter's notion of 'affective capacity' is well worth noting. Gadamer introduces the notion of *transhistorical* to meet the frequent argument that a *suprahistorical* existence is not possible. He further emphasises that these two notions ought not to be confused. Suprahistorical is about going beyond, which can be doubted as being out of reach. Transhistorical is about going through, which is potent. Gadamer chooses the formulation 'a timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other age' to describe the classical (p. 130). Osborne apparently avoids applying classical as an adjective and he does not clarify whether he thinks Gadamer's

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<sup>45</sup> A capitalisation of *Modernity* means that the era is defined by dates.



reasoning has a general validity, which would include the material as well as the immaterial.

Kwinter expresses more distinct views. Referring to Greek cosmology, he states that the 'one' – the original is timeless, whilst the 'many' – the copies are reproduced (p. 36).

Several encyclopaedias and dictionaries (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, 2006, Bonniers Svenska Ordbok, 1983, SAOL, 1998) offer a descriptive definition of *timeless as impression of no time*. *No time* implies that timelessness should formally not be applied to objects as these always are related to time: absolute with a defined date of creation or at least proximate to a time-period. *Impression* gives consent to judgement: Appears not to be related to time. The inclusion of *impression* is loosening the rigidity of the immaterial dimension of timeless. The definition is still ambiguous on the level of time: now-time, new-time, human lifetime, my time and the time I know...? Some of these notions of *time* are relative and changing whilst others are subjective. *Now* and *new* are part of everyday terminology and acknowledged as such. Their respective meanings become less evident when defining time:

*Now time* was according to Benjamin (Osborne, 1995) an instant, an interruption of the present, which was new time. *Now* might also be regarded as an addition to *new*: as *contemporary* opposed to *modern*. *Now* is today often used in this momentarily sense: with reference neither to the future nor to the past and therefore in a way discarding both (Wood, 1997).

Is *new time* then quite simply an opposition to ancient time? Is Modernity and new time perhaps one? Does new time instead mean the start of a new era, which today, depending on source, would be the Second Modernity or 'Another Modernity' (Lash, 1999).

*May now time and new time at any time be used interchangeably?*

Osborne's (1995) analysis results in the suggestion that *new time* and modernity are one but leaves the interpretation of *now time* fairly open. He does however stress the importance of a distinction between *now time* and *new time*. Kwinter (2001) presents the reasonable view that *modern* must be more than a synonym for new or for contemporary. It has to be addressed to any work in any historical period he argues. Admitting that every period has its *new* is of course in line with his belief that an object loses its absolute meaning when it becomes part of a dynamic.

Let us stay with Osborne for a while and *assume that new time and modernity are one*. What effect does this stand have on the status of an object? It leaves us with a plain distinction between *ancient* and *new* as pointed to above. For an object to be *new* means then to be part of modernity, defined either as a cultural theory or an era. Links back to antiquity [as opposed to modernity] are cut off. This is in effect a suggestion that objects are related to humans' ways of living rather than to their ways of being as these cannot be defined through periodicity. Modernisation changes human ways of living in an ongoing process but it is not made clear to what extent these changes are the result of regard for the ways human are. This is of no surprise as body and mind were very much regarded as separate entities when north-western parts of Europe started to leap into modernity in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Lash (1999) suggests that modernity is often without discrimination characterised as rational and *inhuman*. This is more significant for the first or high Modernity, which according to him now has been succeeded by a second. Rationality and inhumanity are here replaced by 'uncertainty and the



unknowable'. From this we can deduce that focus on human ways of living with little or no regard to their ways of being results not only in inhuman conditions but also with enhanced awareness in uncertainty. Lash's main point is about a further development of modernism, what he calls Another Modernity: *difference* has, as a result of the global information culture, now been made 'utopia' and replaced by *indifference* due to the enormous flows of information and communication. The flows or the pace of the flows have trespassed over the limit where humans can enjoy and make use of them.

It is fairly obvious that *becoming modern* meant improvements to humans. However, the aim to ease human life does not seem to have taken human ways of being into enough consideration. Human ways of being cannot be referred to in terms of ancient and new, as argued above. The consequences of this apparent misconception and initial lack of awareness are not sufficiently analysed, judged by where we stand today: a separation of Modernity into 'modernities', to define *side effects* rather than to prescribe a cure. An analysis should include not solely the difference between human ways of living and ways of being but even between nature and man as well as enhanced understanding of traditions.

The break with traditions is one of the foundations of modernism and the result is logically the separation of time and space: people were supposed to change space by suppressing its time scope. Many writers on modernity acknowledge that this separation is not without problem, but argue that it is inevitable for change. Giddens (1990, 1991) tries to overrule this problem through a new approach: he argues that there are 'manifold possibilities of change by breaking free from local habits and practices' (Williamson, Radford & Bennetts, 2003 p. 89 ). He does not seem to seriously consider the possible negative side effects resulting from difficulties in forming a sense of self. This approach is a variety in the sense of not arguing about the break with traditions but on the decreasing influence of traditions, which themselves are changing. Giddens indicates that it is in the process of change the traditions successively become less and less vital as they take on new guises (1999). The possibilities offered by the shrinking importance of traditions are presumptions for handling life in the uncertain times of modernity of today, 'the risk society'. He suggests that these possibilities are used in a reflexive way to constitute a self-identity. Rather than going back to your roots, you look around at the present and choose what seem most suited for your planning of life. It is a well-known fact that there is a lot to gain in raising one's eyes above the horizon and to extend the field of vision. But to choose from 'a manifold of possibilities' is a demanding procedure and Giddens notions here seem quite elitist.

The break with traditions or their growing irrelevance combined with the definition of new as belonging to a defined era with no relation to before have of course had a profound impact on design theory and the designing of objects. There are signs that the ongoing fascination with modernism has retained a focus on actual lifestyles to the cost of how they have come about. Lifestyles or ways of living are in a constant state of flux and development and inspire a short-term view. A distinct break, at some point, with what has been before means inevitably to narrow the vision, make evaluation of new difficult and force a *start from scratch*. Periodisation prevails and with it, it seems, a tendency to regard an object as new on the grounds of it belonging to a new era.

Jameson, one of the most prominent writers on post-modernism, in his latest work (2002) expresses surprise at this fascination with modernism and

modernity. He regards it as a symptom of deterioration and his critique includes Giddens among others. It is not always easy to grasp the essence of Jameson's reasoning due to lack of coherence in terminology but he makes several important points: we will not come to terms with the troubling notion of modernity by giving up our efforts to divide time into periods. Regarding the results of periodisation as narratives instead of eras would facilitate our relation to modernity. Interpreting Jameson: to narrate a period is more dynamic than describing or trying to define it.

He goes on to argue that these narratives cannot be proposed from a subjective standpoint. This is where his critique of Giddens becomes evident: a sense of self must be created as part of a bigger narrative. It is obvious for Jameson that narratives are told in relation to post-modernism, which he calls a break with modernism. Post-modernism is a mixture of the ancient and the modern, an almost purely eclectic time, which means a break with the modern in the same way as the modern meant a break with the ancient. Talks about *breaks* become even more confusing when he argues for the different narratives of modernism to be channelled into visions of the future [which he chooses to call utopia]. His choice of the word channelling implies the presence of flows rather than breaks. Jameson regards it as almost impossible to take on the task of viewing the post-modern society from a holistic point. Mixing breaks and flows he is contributing to this complication. Breaks are obstacles to flows, and a precondition for a holistic view [and also for Jameson's utopia] must consequently be free flows, only limited by vision and not by constructs. His quite healthy critique of the current fascination with modernism, including Giddens and other, is made somewhat edgeless by assigning post-modernism a central position, almost making it an era of reference.

Lash's works (1998, 1999), on the other hand, are more discursive and he has avoided the role of proponent or critic of either modernism or post-modernism, but studied their respective effects. We will return to these more in detail when exploring the notion of tradition in the next section of this chapter.

Understanding time, as *a time* is the result of temporal thinking and periodicity. The distinct breaks this induces create eras. There are three principal conclusions to be made from this part of the deconstruction:

- (i) Eras have a start and an end, which act as obstacles to the human vision. Flows are hampered and the 'new' is defined by the era and equalled with 'now'.
- (ii) Human ways of being are likely to adjust to changing circumstances in an ongoing process, not in fixed eras. Human ways of living are on the contrary changing and possible to attribute to certain eras. This decides where the focus on humans is placed.
- (iii) It is complicated to fit traditions into eras as they by definition are handed over from one generation to another regardless of eras.

### 3:2:2 TIME AS A PROCESS

Classical and timeless are occasionally used as synonyms but with at least one notable distinction: classical appears to have a naturally physical connotation, whilst timeless is preferred in a more philosophical context. However, both denominations are commonly used without regard to this distinction. The basic interpretation of classical refers to time in the sense of *enduring over time* but also

to *a time*', the Classic<sup>46</sup>. In this latter sense it is always capitalised. Classic is also used in the meaning of *traditional*. For enhanced understanding of timeless and timelessness it is important to analyse classic: mainly in the meaning of *enduring over time*, *of enduring excellence* and *traditional*. Classic is as an adjective used as a synonym to traditional, but not to tradition. The analysis in this section will concern the first two meanings whilst the third, *traditional* is part of the analysis in next section, 3:3.

Classical referred in antiquity to people of a defined and well-regarded class. Roman and Greek antiquity is normally referenced when explaining classicism, classical and classic: what follows a standard established in these periods or has this as a paragon. Classicism is then an order or a number of rules, a well-defined way of doing something and classical and classic the resulting artefact. Classical and classic with reference to *endure* is an added meaning according to the dictionaries<sup>47</sup>. There are signs of an ongoing popular confusion concerning this terminology resulting in classic and classical being used without much discrimination.

In mid 1500 Andrea Palladio revived classical Greek architecture, based on proportions. Palladio's architecture is informed 'by the villa', dwellings for wealthier people (Habracken, 2002). He not only worked according to patterns or a standard from antiquity and was thus a follower of classicism, but he also created for a well-regarded class. You don not have to go to Bourdieu (1984) to understand that when people place themselves in society, they are well aware of who is *below* and who is *above*. It is to the people *above* they look when they decide who they want to be and how to live and also how not to live. This might explain the ongoing influence of these *classical orders* or *rules* [about proportions] on architecture and design, an issue which is covered in a number of works, not least on modernism and post-modernism, with positive as well negative approaches.

If Habracken talks about classicism [as represented by Palladio] in terms like 'without political distraction' and 'on a human scale', Padovan (2002) renders an opposite view when referring to Zevi. For him the concepts of 'neoplasticism' and classicism stand for opposite visions, not only of architecture but also of human society. The first represents freedom and democracy, the second, rigidity and despotism. Durkheim, according to Heelas (1993), had the same understanding as Zevi and claimed that these types of standards or rules generally have been transformed into timeless orders and as such inform traditional societies. Durkheim regarded these orders as sacred. As they are conveying the wisdom of the timeless, they cannot be questioned. In reality this means that they can neither be modified nor revised. The traditional society is therefore authoritarian and the individuals externally controlled which hampers their freedom, in expression as in acting.

Views like these have notably inspired an opposition, which became known as the modern movement (Le Corbusier 1925, Pevsner 1968, Forgacs 1995, Padovan, 2002 ). Its founders and followers regarded these orders as hampering development, not only from an architectural and design point of view but also from a social. On the other hand, they obviously did not 'oppose orders' as such, as they replaced the existing with new ones based on what they regarded

<sup>46</sup> Mesoamerican and Mayan culture about A.D. 300-900.

<sup>47</sup> *The dictionaries* refer from here on always to the three dictionaries listed in the bibliography.

as ‘the beauty of geometrical figures and order’. Le Corbusier’s ‘La poëme dangle droite’ and Mies van der Rohe’s single vision on the form and function of a house are well-known (Padovan, 2002).

Julier (2000) and the works of all the authors in Henken & Heynes (2002) give detailed accounts for how the ideals of the modern movement still affects architecture of today all over the world. Even if they have a different emphasis, their respective conclusions converge into one:

*The modernist movement’s break away from classicism [or timeless orders] has resulted in a still valid guide – or even new orders as mentioned earlier - for good design of which many today are called classical or timeless.*

This contradictory outcome has been duly analysed over time.

Rowland’s (1964, 1965) works; how shapes, formulas and measurement (‘The Golden Section’, p. 7) inform and guide but not rule design, never seem to lose their actuality. Danish design education still teaches measured drawing as an important basic design tool. The raise in demand for ergonomic products has given new actuality to almost Leonardo da Vinci style drawings of the human body (Engholm & Michelsen, 1999). Mathematics, including geometry and the rules of proportions, were apparently not the orders causing the modern movement to break with the past. Moreover, modernists apparently embraced classicism in practice. Birkstaed (2002) describes how Colin Rowe, in his essay, ‘The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa’ from 1946, establishes a link between the classical past and contemporary modernism. According to Rowe, it makes sense to compare Palladio’s description of Villa Rotonda with Le Corbusier’s description of Villa Savoye. They both used allegories from the natural landscape when describing their creations. It is in this context important to recall, that Le Corbusier’s adherence to strict geometry and absence of ornaments and decorations developed out of a very early period in his career when he was actually engaged in decorative art. Villa Savoye was designed late in his career, when he admittedly had left some of his most radical views behind (Le Corbusier, 1925). Michael (2002) also brings Villa Savoye onto the agenda in his analysis of Reyner Banham [and his revision of modernism 1960<sup>48</sup>]. The villa is notably regarded as a total rejection of 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture but there are, according to Banham, ‘picturesque Victorian compositions’ behind the style (p. 74).

Michael argues that the essence of Banham’s revision is the suggestion that the true ideas of the Modern Movement were lost in style. Banham was originally a student of Pevsner’s, and is distancing himself from his former tutor’s focus on ‘Zeitgeist’: every object should express the spirit of their time. Michael means that this emphasis on the visual expression of design was at the expense of the reflection of theory. The founding ideas of classicism, in Banham’s terms: harmony and clarity could also be regarded as lost in style, demonstrated by the existence of concepts like ‘classical ornamentation’ (Lloyd Jones, 1991).

There seem to be a number of conceptual ambiguities involved here as orders are interpreted as rules and visual expression as style. With the help of these contradictory arguments and comments a quite different picture emerges: The modernists broke with the rules of the past not least as exemplified by the resulting visual expressions. They consequently neither broke with the past, the

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<sup>48</sup> Theory and Design in the first Machine Age (1960)

orders of the past or with style as a concept. Their opposition concerned 'a ruling style': How among other things, orders were interpreted. The conceptual ambiguity seemed to have also affected their own interpretations and contributed to confusion concerning their ways to reach the objectives.

'In the foreground of every revolution, invisible it seems to the academics, stands a perfect classical column'.

This quote is of unknown origin (Collins, 1987, page 142) but may be applicable to what happened during the modern movement. It was in fact a return to basics, to the idea of classicism. Interestingly, Collins' presents this quote as part of his explanation on what in its turn prompted post-modernism. He argues that the reaction to modernism cannot be blamed on its over-geometrical characteristics, but to its constructs. These took the form of orders instead of recommendations. Post-modernism became then the inevitable reaction, where everything became regarded as relevant in a 'pick and mix' sort of way, a disorder or eclectic order. According to Collins, post-modernism was more than that: a redefinition of classicism and classical values. This came about not only out of a preference for the retrospective and lack of better ideas, which has often been argued, but as a protest of the intensive detraditionalisation during the modern movement.

The emerging picture is becoming more distinct: two major design historical events seem to have been partly misinterpreted with wide reaching effects. (i) The *famous* break with the past looks to have been about turning back to ideas, which have endured for centuries. (ii) Post-modernism appears to have been less radical than traditional. New-classicism, one of the styles of this period was accordingly a signifier of what post-modernism was all about.

Staying with Collins, it is not made clear whether his arguments about classicism and classical values refer to standards established already during antiquity or to the notion of enduring. Classicism always implies strict orders, which as opposed to rules normally might be interpreted. Only a free interpretation would allow for the eclectic of post-modernism but will at the same time pose a risk: the aim of orders is to ensure some kind of continuity, which might be obscured.

Concerning the modernists Collins suggests that their continued strong grip is due to the fact that the technology of the 1920s and 1930s could not realise their true ideas. During decades they lived on as theories or limited applications, which actual practical relevance did not become tested until several decades later.

Lloyd-Jones (1991) agrees in principal with Collins, but also stresses the effect of different media in the creation of these classics, icons and timeless objects. He is talking in terms of 'legitimation' by experts like curators, marketers, writers and the like.

Collins argues that some of the modernist designs were far ahead of their time from a technological point of view. If at all, these designs could at the time be manufactured only in short expensive series, but even so became admired by writers and curators. Objects, which were only *paper products*, hardly more than ideas, also achieved certain fame and became legitimatised. When it was possible to produce the objects industrially they were already of age. This may explain why they swiftly were called timeless or classic but also raises a question: Are we talking about enduring designs or enduring objects? It is again not made clear if the legitimisations at that time were made on judgement of the idea or the style.

The essence of Lloyd-Jones' expression 'legitimation' was one of five important considerations on *affective sustainability and the real world*<sup>49</sup>, made in the introduction of this work: *Is it possible to create a classic by communication?* It was there concluded that if classic is referred to as 'enduring' and classical as 'enduring excellence'<sup>50</sup>, the object or the design must serve human ways of being as our ways of living are constantly changing. As already reported on, Kwinter argues that objects with an 'affective capacity' flow with time and may seem to change but are in fact merely adjusting to varying expressions of human ways of being. This issue is complex but the idea of flow helps to illustrate the difference between human ways of being and living respectively: the former emerges if human behaviour is studied *over time* while the latter if studied at *a time*. Based on this we could claim that it is possible for an object to be legitimatised as a classic but only if it already has what Kwinter calls 'affective capacity', which then may be enhanced by communication.

The analysis of classic thus opened up the concept *over time: time as a process*. Recalling classic's two main connotations, *enduring* and *a defined way of doing* reminds us that classic also is about continuity: classicism. Artefacts created with classic orders in mind were composed according to well-defined geometrical proportions.

*Is there thus evidence enough to claim that these are having a crucial role in creating long lasting objects?*

*Is classicism to be viewed as an idea, a style or both?*

On account of the arguments presented above, the image of a dynamic triangle emerges: the foundation for classicism; harmony and clarity, is developed into different ideas, which ultimately end in styles, which successively becomes detached from the original ideas of classicism and have to be confronted with these to find their way back to its foundations. And so it goes on. The classic object should accordingly be the result of an idea about harmony and clarity, as expressed among other things by geometrical proportions.

#### SUMMARISING COMMENTS

The aim of this section has been to present a general perspective of timelessness in relation to time as well as a more particular view with regard to *a time: an era*, and *over time: a process*. These two notions of time are explored through (i) a temporal approach and (ii) the relation to objects.

The timeless viewed through these approaches introduces *era* as an *antonym*: a defined time as opposed to a non-defined, and *classic* as a *synonym*: in the respect of enduring. Understanding the complexity of *time* stands out as crucial also for the comprehension of human behaviour and merits the enforcement of the notions: *human ways of being*, which remain fairly unchanged *over time* and *human ways of living*, which change with *a time*. This was further emphasised through the introduction of classic as the physical dimension of timelessness: the object. Which of the approaches to *time* a designer chooses is thus likely to be vital as it defines which perspective of human behaviour is allowed to inform the design process. Depending on the brief, which of course might specifically state that the product only should have a short life, it should thus

<sup>49</sup> See further chapter I, Introduction.

<sup>50</sup> As opposed to 'of recognised value' or 'standard of excellence'. (Merriam-Webster (2006))



be part of the designer professionalism to inform the client of the specific in each approach.

A changing apprehension concerning the balance between the genetic and the social (Uddenberg, 1998) is one probable reason for a rising interest in the affective dimension of design. Some references have already been made to cognitive theory when discussing the dimensions of timelessness and the issue of perception is explored in more detail in section 3:4 and 3:5. At this stage it is important to repeat the basic implications: human actions are never the result of a singular mode; our ways of being are of course influenced by our environment, where we have our experiences. This influence operates on the level where there is little or no reflection. In principle, *being* stands out as the base on which to build enhanced knowledge of humans. With this principle in mind, it is difficult to see the relevance of eras as the most constructive way of dealing with time. It ought consequently to be more relevant for designers to regard time as a process with constant flows, if not with constant pace. This dynamic view is likely to provide an improved base for a culture of innovation than alternatively looking back, not seeing beyond modernism [due to a break with traditions] or looking forward, being limited by the end of the communication society [or as far as technology is likely to go in the perspective of today]. *Being ahead of one's time* could then be recognised as a signifier of how time is approached: as a process.

Kwinter describes well how objects flow as part of this process: they have an affective capacity as they relate to human ways of being in changing contexts. For example, Christopher Dresser had the label of being *ahead of his time* attached to him (Bröhan & Berg, 2001). His designs from around 1880 are still found to have an astonishing resemblance with objects, which were designed 100 years or more later.<sup>51</sup>

### 3:3 Being modern and breaking with traditions

Modernity and new time are often used as synonyms and as antonyms to antiquity and ancient time. There are varying definitions as to when Modernity started and it is impossible to give an exact time reference. Spelled with a capital, Modernity is the name of an era, a reasonably well-defined period. Many authors thus prefer to emphasise the process in which the west and the world became modern and spell 'modernity' instead. This process took place between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and began in North West Europe by the time of Protestant Reformation, which perhaps also set it off. Changes initiated by this and also the Renaissance became manifested during the 18<sup>th</sup> century as *modern society* in the western part of the world and marked the rise of an industrial society [as opposed to an agrarian] (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006 a). Modernisation has continued ever since and several later philosophers argue with reason that every time has its modern and consequently its modernism: "A self conscious break with the past and search for new forms of expression." (Merriam-Webster, 2006)

The *modernism*, which is currently mostly referred to, dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The changes it suggested to society were made possible through industrial development, which in turn initiated what is commonly known as the Modern Movement within architecture and design. Nikolaus Pevsner's essential study of the persons, who contributed to this movement, was concluded in

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<sup>51</sup> See p. 127, figure 10.



‘Pioneers of the Modern Movement’ (1936). In its current fourth edition the name of the book has been changed to “The Pioneers of Modern Design” (2005). The reason for this change is most likely confusion concerning how to define the Modern Movement. Pevsner initially included two major schools as part of this movement: The Arts and Crafts Movement and Bauhaus.

‘Morris laid the foundation of the modern style; with Gropius its character was ultimately determined’ (2005, p. 27).

In this *determined* form modern style has become equated to the Modern Movement, which of course was later accentuated by the 2<sup>nd</sup> CIAM conference, which proclaimed the now famous break with traditions a presupposition for modernisation (Stritzler-Levine, 1996). Le Corbusier’s very firm stand on modern style meant distancing from all decoration and allusions to historic styles (Marcus, 2005). *Modernists* (i) and *modernism* (ii) have consequently become denominations for (i) followers of, if not Le Corbusier, at least Gropius and (ii) the elaboration of the style once determined at the Bauhaus.

Many modernists regard history as an ideological burden, something that is an obstacle in the constant urge for development. This way of thinking also infers that there is little to learn from history, from the past. Philosophers like Walter Benjamin actually suggest that the historical narrative has no living relationship with the present and therefore is no longer is a form of ‘memorative communication’ (Osborne, 1995, p. 133). This might look like a denial of the importance of experience, or at least experience, which is not part of modernity. This is to be further discussed later.

Why this distancing from all that has been? The answers are probably to be found by examining more than one agenda: On the *academic agenda*, there is a certain scepticism concerning transhistorical and suprahistorical value and opposing views are more discursive than analytical. (Osborne, 1995, Burkhardt, F & Morozzi, C., 1995). On the *political agenda* of western societies and other societies influenced by their culture, it is part of democratisation: part of the process to break free from a cultural heritage created by the few and privileged. The ground breaking CIAM conference referred to above had accordingly the theme: ‘Housing for low income earners’. This process in a way still continues.

The issue of traditions is relevant in several aspects and there are reasons to consider well their role, positive as negative, in the modernisation process. Firstly, they influence human perception as parts of the referential frame (together with factors like knowledge and experience), which determine or guide how we intellectually process what we perceive. Secondly, they are carriers of experience. In the process of detraditionalisation, as part of modernisation, both aspects have been portrayed as negative. A sociologist like Giddens (1990) argues that traditions are limiting the scope and blocking most individual’s ability to look beyond what is already established. They further prevent a fresh look at new and old problems and thereby obscure possible solutions (Forgacs, 1995).

### 3:3:1 TRADITION, TRADITIONALISM AND TRADITIONALITY

Osborne (1995) argues that the different grammatical forms of tradition ought to be interpreted individually even if sharing the same base. He underlines his view by introducing ‘traditionalism’ and ‘traditionality’ as separate notions necessary to fully understand all dimensions in which tradition ought to be viewed. The other interpretations Osborne suggests are partly of Derrida character: emphasising ‘*la Différance*’, what separates *langue* from *parole* and

sets a distinction between indication and expression. The static character of *langue* and the temporal character of *parole* underlines that the distinction is not only spatial in nature<sup>52</sup> (Lash 1993, 1998)

Originally all these forms have come from the Latin *tradere* (Merriam-Webster, 2006), which means *to hand over*, to deliver and which of course also is the base for *trade*. In several dictionaries<sup>53</sup> this is put forward as the principal meaning. *Traditional* is the adjective form of tradition but proposed as main synonym is 'conventional'. *Traditionalism* is of course also referred back to tradition, not only as the resulting practices, but also as '*the beliefs of those opposed to modernism, liberalism and radicalism*' (Merriam-Webster, 2006). Belonging to the past, to *what has been* and to *the old* are further accentuated meanings. The word *custom* is also commonly used to define tradition in less comprehensive dictionaries (Bonniers Svenska Ordbok) and computer program thesaurus<sup>54</sup>, which may be one explanation to the confusion of tradition and *habit*, which will be addressed further on in this work. Concerning tradition there is apparently still a difference between *langue* and *parole*, whilst concerning the other described forms [and according to Osborne also *traditions*], *parole* has become *langue* also the grammatical meanings mainly stress *the past*. Returning to Lash (1993), who draws on Derrida, there is reason to argue that the spoken language rather than influencing the grammatical has developed into a written language, which has taken a more tendentious form indicating meaning but not arriving at expressing it. The meaning is, to paraphrase Lash, 'constantly eluded' (p. 254).

During the modern movement [as defined above] within architecture and design the indication to 'break with the past' was expressed as a 'break with traditions'. The difference has evidently never been thoroughly analysed and thus almost been postponed. 'Retaining the past' has obviously become an established and popular definition of tradition following it in all its forms, whilst the meaning of 'handing over experience' has become obsolete or at least obscured.

Modernist architects and designers thus put the abandoning of tradition and traditionalism high on the agenda, which also had political resonance and has made it retain its position. Meanwhile philosophers engaging themselves in processes of modernisation introduced a temporal logic that inspired a less rigid and more faceted view on these issues. Osborne records contributions from Ricoeur, Gadamer, Kosseleck and Benjamin to the discourse on tradition and traditionalism not least in respect of their relation to time, timelessness and history.

Gadamer uses one single heading, 'tradition'. He also suggests that timelessness is a mode of historical being which is rather 'transhistorical' than 'suprahistorical' and which is not only retrospective but can be projected into the future.

Ricoeur distinguishes three of the forms within the notion of tradition discussed above: tradition, traditions and traditionalism. He suggests that these forms are motivated by a distinction between experience and preservation.

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<sup>52</sup> The 'a' in *différance* as opposed to difference was a way for Derrida to mark spatial and temporal difference respectively (Lupton, E & Miller, J.A., 1994)

<sup>53</sup> Referring to Bonniers Svenska Ordbok, Merriam-Webster and SAOL

<sup>54</sup> Microsoft Word version 2000.

Kosseleck separates the ‘futurity of the horizon of expectation from the space of experience’ and thereby presents ‘Modernity as a disruption’ and not as a new form of historical consciousness.

Benjamin seems to contradict himself, when he recognises that the core of tradition is not only about preservation but also about the communicability of experience. He also suggests that the meaning of modernisation is to abandon tradition in the meaning of preservation, not in the meaning of experience.

The will to break with a historical narrative that reproduces a cultural form that seemed to have lost its meaning is everywhere present among the philosophers of modernism as is a fear that this form might become destructive. The evident ambiguity in their writings has no doubt created a continuing and very poignant dilemma about how to relate to the past, about the distinction between preservation and experience and the relevance of *suprahistorical* and *transhistorical* value as discussed earlier. Designers and architects belong to a category, which cannot escape influence. How are they in their work to relate to time and history, to transmit the experience embedded in the received heritage without in the end preserving fixed forms which are no longer relevant, but likely nostalgia?

Osborne analyses Ricoeur’s standpoint on tradition/s and traditionality as follows: If tradition is the idea of the “communicative truth” and the “finitude of all understanding”, we are talking about preserving without regard to relevance in a transhistorical sense, which would be adaptation of the past to the future. If traditionality is an absolute way of transmitting received heritage, we are again talking about a precise way of doing something: a fixed cultural form. Ricoeur suggests that this is traditionalism, a way to act in line with the past. *Traditionality, which is universal in character and does not operate on the level of the content of traditions, is a way to relate to the past.* This is then not about preservation but about presumption. A tradition is thus an experience presumed as a truth only until a stronger argument is established. In other words: *A tradition contains strong arguments that should neither be overlooked nor be taken for truths.*

Traditionality does not knowingly exist as an established grammatical form or as an in ordinary term. However, a distinction concerning how to relate to traditions is made possible by the introduction of traditionality as an important complement to traditionalism. These two terms actualise that tradition and traditions have to be viewed not only on the *level of content, truths* but also on the *level of action, experience*.

### 3:3:2 NOSTALGIA AND TRADITION RETHOUGHT

References to traditions as some kind of *timeless orders* are frequently found in literature. Orders are without doubt what have kept societies together and going. In a paper on the crisis of social reproduction Lash (2003), drawing on Durkheim, notes that order was achieved in traditional societies through ‘mechanical solidarity’ and conscience collective, in modern societies by interdependence [of individuals and institutions] and collective consciousness. In contemporary societies [information/ communication societies], where the body has become “deterritorialised”, this interdependence has loosened, with its well-known effects on norms and order as the former act as rules.

This implies that a process of detraditionalisation would inevitably have happened with the communication age and the resulting globalisation had it not

occurred already with the modern movement. It also presupposes that culture is part of conscience collective and thereby of the social.

This is where Lash opposes Durkheim in suggesting that the social is comprised of norms, whilst culture is comprised of values and symbols. According to Lash, this also makes it more reasonable to look at culture as being part of a collective consciousness rather than a conscience collective. Lash's critique of Durkheim seems appropriate but it would have been interesting if he had enlarged his reasoning to embrace tradition. Referring to Talcott Parsons he talks about values as 'pattern maintenance' (p. 2), they are transmitted from generation to generation and if in themselves not orders, they are underpinning orders. Understood this way culture is, according to Lash, in a way universal where societies are finite. Lash does not make a distinction between these patterns on the level of experience versus preservation and it is not made clear whether he thinks this would be relevant. He does anyway rule out culture as a conscience collective, which suggests 'a dynamic view' of tradition. Even if culture is something that is handed over, it is dynamic in the sense of experience but static in the sense of preservation. The idea that experience could be lifted out from tradition or rather traditionality does not seem realistic. When it comes to preservation the expression 'conscience collective' seems relevant, something is done because it ought to be, not because it is necessarily representing a *truth*. On the individual level this is often called nostalgia, something is preserved because it makes you *feel good*, if not always pleased. Collective consciousness, on the other hand, indicates some kind of awareness and is therefore relevant to experience.

The issue of consciousness in the context of tradition is further elaborated by Lash (1993). He is analysing deconstruction with regard to tradition and drawing mainly on Husserl, Derrida and other *Husserlians*. Derrida, initially also a Husserlian, distanced himself from his master concerning inter-subjectivity: He emphasised 'I and it' rather than 'I and thou', which according to Lash resulted in references to the past being 'allusions of playful and formalist "bricolage", without history, meaning, value or content. In short, without tradition' (p. 261 ). This is a very important point as it brings to the fore another difference: the content of the past is nothing but a number of indications if they are handed over without thinking, only in combination with tradition do they get expressed and gain meaning. The issue of consciousness is central here. Lash writes that only as the result of a natural attitude, which is immediate, not reflexive and on the level of the everyday world, can we access or make the most of traditions. These are immanent and the result of 'I experience' rather than 'I think', which would be 'where traditions might lead us', as transcendence is what is aimed at.

This phenomenological approach is a way for philosophers to deal with the conscious and the unconscious: what we are able to experience we add to consciousness (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006 b). Reflection fixes this experience. The theoretical or reflexive attitude states that only by thinking is meaning created whilst with a natural attitude meaning is part also of immediate experience. This would indicate that the habitual is a result of reflection as it is a fixed way of acting and not immediate and un-reflected as often is indicated. Lash concludes that to take tradition seriously, to bring them back from "the disused junkyard of background assumptions" (p. 250) it is fundamental to break with the reflexive [reflective] for the natural attitude.

The notion of the natural attitude as immediate prompts associations with the emotional. Forlizzi, Disalvo & Hanington (2003), in their article on the

relations between experience, emotion and products, draw on Carlsson and Dewey when they discuss experienced versus immediate emotions [or emotional statement]. Their main point is that the immediate is centred on the self whilst the experienced is built on information from the environment and requires intellectual activity. They are thus making two interesting proposals; (i) the immediate is not built on experience, (ii) reflection is essential to make sense of experience. This is a different interpretation of Dewey than the one discussed in section 2:3 and is in fact advocating a reflective attitude to make sense of experience. It furthermore alludes to the idea that the self is to a degree self-contained, which is likely only in theory. The suggestion that emotions are working on different level of experience is interesting though. In what way might then emotions be linked to nostalgia and tradition respectively?

Drawing on Forlizzi, Disalvo & Hanington as well as Lash concerning the immediate and the emotional, there is reason to view traditions as being individual [or singular] as well as particular and general. Making a clear distinction between nostalgia and tradition is not purposeful, but it is logical to assume that tradition on an individual level might be nostalgia. This does not mean that a tradition on this level necessarily is nostalgia. Even if emotional is the antonym to rational, emotions are contributing to the rational, which is discussed more in length further on in this work with reference to Damasio (1994) and Morse (2005). The nature of the interaction between the emotional and the rational is normally difficult to assess though. Nostalgia is by definition also about preserving, but as will be addressed below, might even so be part of a rationale other than conserving the past. Lash purports that the natural attitude is imperative to recall traditions. Is he thus suggesting that these are emotional experiences?

The confusion about the role of emotions and experience on the level of the immediate becomes very evident by putting arguments from the authors above side by side. There also appears to be certain confusion concerning *reflection* and *rationality*.

Without using the actual word *rational*, Lash also suggests above that traditions are adding sense to the past as manifested in artefacts. The trademark rationality of modernisation and not least the modern movement defied traditions. The modernists saw rationality as a way to break free from traditionalism, as a counterforce, while Lash argues in opposite direction: traditions help us to act rationally in the sense of making the most of what we have. This issue obviously needs to be more analysed.

Is it rational to be consistent? Most people would be likely to agree. Not following a given lead, to jump between alternatives without evaluating them, is normally regarded as very irrational and time consuming. Traditions are no doubt about consistency. The Spanish architect Abalos (2001) in his analysis of “the good life” finds that nostalgia also offers consistency. He refers to Martin Heidegger’s hut in the Black Forest and admits that there is an existential conflict with time, which is nostalgia. For Abalos this is not negative. He traces the 1980s revitalisation of historical centres and the 1990s planning for sustainable growth to Heidegger’s hut as a signifier (p. 58):

‘... the revising of modern orthodoxy is shot through with the yearning that both Heidegger and Tessenow managed to dignify, by living apart from technological obsession and the idea of progress, by a return to a more balanced

relationship with nature, by an uncomplicated and more modest formula for inhabiting, one is also capable of establishing a certain harmony with our past.'

Does nostalgia described in these terms call for a revision or should it be considered as an important addition to earlier reasoning concerning the distinction between respectively traditions/traditionalism and traditions/traditionality as (i) orders/preserving and (ii) experiences/developing?

Abalo's interpretation of nostalgia introduces instead a link between these two stands and presents a sound alternative to the 'either-or' position. It might also serve as an example of an *emotional experience*, which would be a variety of a tradition. Further according to Abalos, Heidegger never implied that it should be possible to fulfil such nostalgia on a more general level, not least due to political reasons. He just admitted it as part of his way of being<sup>55</sup> and fulfilled it on a private level with his hut. This awareness, by Gianni Vattimo (quoted by Abalos, p. 56) positively called 'weak thinking'<sup>56</sup>, has given dignity to the notion of nostalgia: there is more to it than an individual who preserves the past. It is certainly tempting to generalise from these experiences and thereby create confusion about what to transfer from the past to the present. Contesting that nostalgia might carry experience of more general relevance would not be correct either.

Lash (1993) argues that the absence of inter-subjectivity in combination with the aspiration to deconstruct rationality has further problematised the issue of tradition, which is to be seen not least in architecture. He is not referring to nostalgia but writes about the mixing of sources for inspiration as styles without content. Works of post-modernist architects spring easily to the mind here as several of these are regarded as the result of quite cluttered thinking, with only a few seemingly managing to present consistency in theory as in practice. Judging from the result, many of these architects reproduced and mixed without explaining purpose or conveying meaning. This fact has prevailed also among later architects. Abalos exemplifies this architecture with the works of Robert Venturi and suggests that it is either irony or piety - perhaps a mix - that enable us to operate simultaneously on the level of nostalgia and reality. This is not to be confused with the importance of the 'simultaneous awareness of past and present' (p. 103), even if contradictory according to Maccreanor (2005).

Having reached this stage of argumentation it is relevant to return to the earlier notions of *ways of being* and *ways of living*. For Heidegger, (Abalo, 2001) as an existentialist, *Being* was central and the awareness of roots and originality, what cannot be changed, a precondition for being as opposed to only *living*. He made it manifest that nostalgia is part of a way of being and showed one way to handle it in his way of living: his hut in the Black Forest.

The natural attitude, to regard tradition as immanent and make sense of what we see, ought most likely to be balanced by a more reflected attitude to nostalgia. Reflection is needed to separate preserving without evaluation from handing over experience for continued usage. There is no reason to believe other than what an individual regards as timelessness is sometimes in fact nostalgia with little relevance in a more general sense. The interesting addition by Heidegger's

<sup>55</sup> or rather Being as Dasein, which is essential to Heidegger's philosophy (Abalo, 2001)

<sup>56</sup> In Italian: pensiero debole (Abalo, 2001)



thinking is that nostalgia might, when rightly interpreted, have wider implication than the strictly personal.

Decades<sup>57</sup> before Damasio (1994) contested Descartes' 'I think therefore I am', Heidegger proposed a link between the emotional and the rational human, a link he suggested balanced important decisions prompted by for example technological advances.

### 3:3:3 DETRADITIONALISATION AND RE-TRADITIONALISATION

The term detraditionalisation was introduced in the spirit of among others Beck (1992) and Giddens (1990, 1991) and has partly succeeded the original trademarks of modernisation and modernity since enlightenment: rationalisation and secularisation. The basic assumptions remain however the same: traditions are not compatible with a modern society.

Opponents of this post-traditional worldview have started to claim that there is evidence that it is impossible to detraditionalise, as traditions almost are presuppositions for a functioning society (Thompson, Campbell & Luke, 1993)

The main reasons for the dichotomy between modern and traditional have already been accounted for: traditions are timeless orders or unquestioned truths and thereby hamper development. Even if modern society, according to the detraditionalists, by necessity has made traditions lose their original status, they still pose a threat as they take on new forms, the most problematic being as base for a growing fundamentalism. Traditions as experience have no place in this school of thinkers. On the contrary, signs of regression and reaction are quite commonly viewed as symptoms of surviving traditions. Thompson, Campbell and Luke use different approaches when revaluing tradition.

*Thompson* has chosen to distinguish between four aspects: the hermeneutic, the normative, the legitimating and the formation of identity. He argues that all aspects are to be considered as part of modern society but that it is important to establish how they have changed and are changing. While traditions have lost their significance as norms and do not any longer legitimise actions in society, they are still crucial when it comes to enhance understanding of society, creating a sense of belonging and forming an identity. According to Thompson, they also have the ability to constantly re-embed themselves in new contexts and thereby regain new meaning replacing what might have become obsolete. He is however aware of the downsides involved: in our mediated world we see the creation of 'artificial traditions', which are not rooted in the day-to-day life of individuals, as are the 'authentic traditions'. His logical stand is that it will be increasingly difficult and perhaps not even important to hold these two types of traditions apart. However, what might be more serious is when the above-mentioned re-embedding becomes very localised and fosters either nationalism, including claims on 'traditional territory' or raises boundaries and promotes protectionism.

*Luke* reasons along two theoretical paths: (i) tradition is in opposition to modernity in the same way as nature to culture, (ii) the problematic of less stable 'spatial orderings' is very central to detraditionalisation. Traditions became 'impossible' when the separation of time and space accelerated in the course of modernity as they were viewed upon as localised. Luke draws on Gross<sup>58</sup> when claiming that traditions have 'survived' modernisation. Further in his critique of

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger's wrote about his hut in 1962

<sup>58</sup> The past in ruins, 1992.



modernity, Gross still has much of a 'de facto' approach when he continues to look at the notions of 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft' (introduced by Weber) as oppositions and regards a development towards the latter as inevitable but not desirable. The introduction and persistence of binaries and oppositions are, to understand Luke, what has kept detraditionalisation going but are rather fabricated than true contradictions. It is like setting the given up against the made instead of discussing how these could interact. He is also identifies the additional impact on these oppositions of 'stories of time passing into the new' instead of centring on 'structures emerging in the now' (p. 111).

*Campbell* also studies Weber in his search for the foundations for the break with traditions but makes the approach from another angle: Weber's tendency to identify habits with tradition. Campbell states that these are very different phenomena and suggests that this mistake stems from the talk about 'traditional behaviour', which are habits. These are normally quite personal practices and have, claims Campbell, a lifespan of maximum the lifetime of an individual.

In what way has this confusion contributed to the doing away with traditions? A habitual pattern of actions became more and more difficult with the changing circumstances of modernity. *Habits* are reflected or at least conditioned actions, which as a result of time are performed *without reflection* until they are found not to serve their initial purpose and have to be abandoned. Campbell actually implies that here is no authority of tradition involved. 'The quality of "unchallengeability" disappeared from the contemporary social world' and is perhaps 'all that detraditionalisation is taken to mean' (p. 164). When the modernists, and later post-modernists, wanted to underline the importance of choice and voluntarism in the creation of a different world they appear to have presumed that decision-making always is conscious. As a consequence, they overlooked the power of habits and concentrated on traditions about whose existence there is a much more individual awareness.

Campbell points here to the same 'intellectualisation' and kind of elitism that is criticised earlier in this work with regard to Giddens and others. Notably, human beings are in their private and personal life constantly engaged in the process of making things work. Only a fraction of the opportunities, which according to Giddens, Beck and others, are available in theory can possibly be taken into consideration or be made part of real life. This amount of choice risks instead contribute to the creation of routines, or even making these necessary, as a way of handling life. If they work, the routines are legitimising themselves as habits. In the absence of traditions, or what Campbell chooses to call 'natural legitimation', habits have most likely become strong. They work on a lower level of awareness, they are more individual and they are more challenging to identify and change. Looked at this way, the doing away with traditions has contributed to a more rigid than flexible society.

This over-reliance on theories for direct application on practice is also criticised by Gerdenryd (2002) as was initially discussed already in section 2:3 of this chapter. Designing is a cognitive activity, which is squeezed between the schools of design methods and cognitive science and thus suffering from an intellectual bias. Cognition has come to be viewed as an *intra-mental* activity rather than what Gerdenryd chooses to call *interactive*. He suggests that cognition suffers from the very sophisticated methods used in cognitive science: mathematics, computer science and formal logic, which aim at creating an ideal

picture. Design methods have developed into 'prescriptions' based on some kind of strict logic rather than taken the form of recommendations in a supporting framework. Gerdenryd introduces the concept 'making sense of the mundane': to accept that in our cognition there is a give and take between our intellectual activities and what he calls the result of 'lower capacities', actions we perform without much thinking. This tendency to give emphasis to intellectual activities is of course a result of the development of science as part of modernisation. His conceptual thinking is very close to the 'natural attitude' approach to meaning proposed by Lash (1993) and discussed earlier.

Following Gerdenryd's critique concerning theorisation, *the application of the ideal on real life* emerges in its extreme as almost absurd. The designer is supposed to be almost exclusively governed by decisions taken in a closed, rational environment and the consumer invited to choose among all these intellectually and scientifically produced artefacts in a reflexive process based on a preferred identity. This thinking brings to mind Adolf Loos' ideology but on the level of human ways of being: to do away with everything that does not seem to be strictly functional. The subject is here in a way placed on a par with the [soulless] object, *I and It*. What Gerdenryd criticises in his work is actually detraditionalisation in a lesser-known form: an effort to do away with what cannot be controlled and/or has no scientific legitimacy in the modern sense of the word.

His reasoning also offers additional evidence that inter-subjectivity is in fact a precondition when considering traditions and that focus on scientific validity stimulates objectification under the cover of objectivity.

### 3:3:4 TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Innovation and its relation to timelessness is one of five issues considered as central when the phenomenon is set in its context and discussed in chapter I. Would emphasising timelessness create a negative innovation culture? An analysis of the notion of *new* indicates that *newness* as a result of development rather than variation ought to be enhanced by timelessness. The desire for *the new* emerges when *the old* does no longer take care of you, which you may experience as everything from genuine dissatisfaction to general boredom. This new is meant to bring improvement but succeeds sometimes only to bring change. This is not to deny that change might be the desired improvement and more readily bring satisfaction and not a desire for a better *new* as the first did not live up to expectations.

Traditions interpreted as timeless orders are viewed as impeding change. Negus & Pickering (2004) challenge this notion of tradition as static and an antithesis to innovation. Interestingly, they make little distinction between change and innovation, which might seem confusing but follows the logic of how tradition is defined: it neither impedes nor inspires change, which is not experienced as bringing improvement. Learning from 'the natural attitude' approach, a tradition has to be assessed a positive value as an experience to be handed over. If it is assessed a negative value it is ruled out as a truth and replaced.

Negus and Pickering draw on Burke, a 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and defender of tradition and Hayek, a 20<sup>th</sup> century leading economist and governmental adviser. Hayek's views, advocating a free market order, coincide with those of Burke in opposing collectivism and central planning including social development and change. These two thinkers might seem very apart as defenders

of tradition, but the authors' choice are most likely not only deliberate but strategic: beliefs in unregulated markets have connotations to a positive innovation climate.

Burke is a conservative philosopher and his defence of tradition is based on preservation for the sake of retaining wisdom. His arguments thus also embrace wisdom as manifested in our built heritage. Hayek is a market liberal and is defending tradition as living knowledge. Both regard tradition as wiser than human reason as it is knowledge, which we can attain without reflection. Referring to Gray and his analysis of Hayek in 1984, Negus and Pickering writes (p. 96):

'For Hayek as for Burke, tradition is a central knowledge-bearing component of social order, since that what enters into and is reproduced through tradition can neither be known in advance nor collectively altered, except in minor particulars. For Hayek, the accretion of knowledge within traditions is the result of an evolutionary process of natural selection, which should not be tampered with because as with Burke's valuation of it, it has not only stood the test of time and proved adaptable to changing circumstances, but is also in itself *usually inaccessible to critical statement*'.<sup>59</sup>

Even if not criticising the actual core of Hayek's reasoning and the base for Burke's arguments, they doubt this conservative approach to tradition, which involves a certain predestination. It is exactly this kind of *fatalism*, which has part in given rise to tradition becoming the antithesis of modernity. They suggest instead an approach, which primarily takes account of 'changing circumstances' on the level of *reconstruction rather than adaptation*. It is crucial to underline this difference as it implies what was earlier called traditionality: rather find a way of relating to the past than make the past and the present fit together. The intention involved here is in line with 'the natural attitude' approach and the realization of what is given. Negus & Pickering do not specifically comment on Burke's and Hayek's notions converging in the belief that traditions are regained without reflection. This prompts a question: can humans reconstruct the un-reflected?

Addressing this question, it is necessary to once again actualise human ways of being as opposed to their ways of living. In the beginning of this section humans' un-reflected actions were discussed as a matter of *survival*: essential for dealing with changing circumstances. If traditions are regained without reflection, these experiences are important to survival. However, the fact that traditions may be accessed without reflection does neither imply that they would not benefit from being intellectually processed nor that they might not suffer. For one and as discussed earlier, the discrimination between nostalgia and tradition probably takes reflection.

When Negus & Pickering note that, 'the creative mind can only be original on the basis of some existing tradition, yet critical value is often excessively loaded on the sense of originality' (p.111) they evidently refer to continuity as a precondition for true creativity. If interpreting them correctly, originality ought in effect to be based in tradition to merit as a quality. In an effort to clarify, they compare with storytelling or writing: if someone in an aim to be original started to use a new language without a past, they would not be understood. Furthermore,

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<sup>59</sup> Italics are not applied in the original text.

the effort needed would divert attention from the story and risk affecting its quality negatively. Tradition could in the same sense as language, be seen as a resource or a tool.

### 3:3:5 THE MODERN MOVEMENT; TRADITIONS AND VISIONS

In concluding these sections on tradition it would be easy to draw a picture of modernism as a liberator, which turned into a destroyer. Hasan-Uddin Khan makes two comments of special interest to the notion of tradition and detraditionalisation in his article 'The impact of Modern Architecture on the Islamic World' (2002). Both these comments are worth analysing.

(i) According to Khan, the modern movement was not alone in pursuing universality. This was also the aim for movements within Islam. Universality is normally attempted by emphasising what unites human beings and by generalising what separates them. Culture, where traditions are embedded, exemplifies the latter. Islamic universality with no regard to different sub-cultures within has evidently caused conflict and hatred, which is far beyond the scope of this work to discuss. A thorough examination of the extent to which the universal aims of the modern movement by way of detraditionalisation has contributed to the trademark fragmentation and uncertainty of our contemporary times would also lead this work out of focus. Claiming that modernism in its pursuit of universality has negatively influenced the roots of vernacular architecture, design and local culture in the western world appears reasonable though.

(ii) Khan argues further, that modernism in the Islamic world developed on the base of regional vernacular architecture. In this process it simultaneously applied clichés of Islamic Culture, which with hindsight well could have done away with, according to him. This illustrates the problematic of tradition or rather the sometimes, difficult distinction between tradition and nostalgia on the level of experience and its general as opposed to individual validity. It also points to the dilemma of avoiding superficiality, where an idea loses its rationale and turns into a style without content<sup>60</sup>. Louis Kahn, the US architect who died 1974, is widely recognised as the architects' architect as opposed to the publicly known architect. His last work, the parliament building in Dhaka (fig.1), shows that cultural identification is possible without clichés (Lewan, 2006).

A number of re-definitions of terminology, new interpretations of meaning and discussion of possible effects on human action are part of the outcome of cultural theorists' and sociologists' effort to rethink the break with traditions. Together with practising architects and designers they have set out to examine and try to interpret the manifested result: the built and designed environment.

Forty-five authors contributed in Henket's & Heynen's edited work: "Back from Utopia. The Challenge of the Modern Movement" (2002) with articles evaluating the impact of the modern movement. Some articles and conclusions have been referred to earlier in this chapter. All voices present their critique with differing approaches, and the editors have tried to group them accordingly: remaining values, general criticism, regard to colonialism, politics and history/conservation. Trying to extract the essence of these articles in an effort to balance the theories of tradition and traditionality with some practical implications has been a useful exercise. Special attention is paid to how the authors balance ideals with reality when assessing current critiques concerning intellectualisation.

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<sup>60</sup> Style is sometimes regarded as a synonym for visual expression, hence the addition 'without content'.





Figure 1 Parliament building, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Even if there is, according to Jameson and others as mentioned earlier, an ongoing fascination with modernism, the general legacy judged by the practising architects, historians and theoreticians in the articles in this book is one of consensus: the Modern Movement ought not to be revived, neither as idea nor as a style. Having made this remark it is very important to state that this does not mean that the movement has lost its importance. Thorough analyses of its founders and followers have not managed to conclude with one singular view within this movement about what concerns the past, the present and the future or with regard to the notions of time, aesthetics and traditions.

The invitation to build on the past, which is attributed to Adolf Loos when he emphasises that ‘the modern is embedded in tradition’ (p. 316) is countered by Le Corbusier’s urge to break with traditions as ‘the only fast way forward’ (p. 316).

In a different spirit Le Corbusier is quoted as calling his followers to ‘embrace *Zeitgeist* but reject its surface attributes and image of perpetual novelty’ (p. 317).

Lewi (2002) captures the dilemma when posing the question: ‘Is it against modernism to conserve modernist buildings?’ (p. 354).

This brings us back to Kosseleck (Osborne, 1995) and his notion of ‘Modernity as a disruption’. Do all the contradictions to be found within the Modern Movement signal that something has been overlooked? Did its founders and ideological followers never intend to start a new era but to ask for a halt and for people [at least the establishment] to look for new possibilities instead of established certainties long enough to be able to realise the potential of the new? And then use what promises to bring matters forward, together with the certainties, the traditions that still seem valid or true? In this sense a modernist building should only be conserved to the point where it has brought matters forward, where it meant development. It should never be conserved as ‘a disruption’, other than as possibly a museum piece. The answer to Lewi’s question is then of course *No*, not because it is modernist, only if it has contributed to real change. This is also the essence of Allen’s article ‘.. acceptance of change is the essential precondition for real conservation ..’ (2002, p. 21)

What is then to be brought on from modernism and the Modern Movement? What has future relevance?

As mentioned above, the contributors to the book are due to their profession either having an intellectual or a practical approach to the subject. Independent of approach, they are united in their critique of the Modern Movement: there is an imbalance on the level of ideal and real.

Not only did the founders of this movement distance themselves from human ways of being foremost through their disregard for existing patterns, also the intellectual and ideological process was continued by sociologists under the theme of *detraditionalisation* and by designers and architects as *modernist style*, based on the machine aesthetic. The depth of the intellectual penetration and its relation to the real and the practical is still a question of debate.

Lund (2002) writes in his article that he sees the Modern Movement as a liberator of design in Scandinavia, something that caused a necessary halt and made Scandinavian architects and designers see new professional possibilities in their heritage of light and nature.

Staying with modernism but turning to a different work, Lund's view is not shared by all: Rampell (2002) dedicates her entire doctoral thesis to an attack on modernism and its Scandinavian proponents. Modernism has during more than half a century kept design in an iron grip in these countries in general and in Sweden in particular, she argues. The main target for her attack is the organisation Svensk Form, since 1845 the official voice for Swedish craft and design and she is not alone [even if more aggressive] in her critique. A different picture emerges when the authors with a British colonial background give a unanimous account in their articles in Henket & Heynen: in their countries, where the ideological part of the modern movement never penetrated, the existing form of modernism is much closer connected to roots and vernacular architecture than in western culture. In USA modernism was famously adopted as the International Style, an ideal without ideology argued Frank Lloyd-Wright, in a number of articles written in the 1930s (Pfeiffer, 1993). The awareness he created made other architects react. Louis Kahn (Lewan, 2006) asked already at a CIAM conference in the mid 1950s for a different language of form, where 'buildings appealed to a sensual experience of architecture'. In South America, notably Brazil, the development proceeded as in the British colonies: pragmatism without too much ideology. The strings to the roots were never cut and modernism became the result of "interaction of marginal cultures and intercultural mix" (Segre, 2000).

Making a fair conclusion from Henket's & Heynen's ambitious work: it is the intellectualisation of the modern movement, which has resulted in an ambiguous legacy where the true visionaries and liberating forces well might have been, and as it appears still is, incorrectly interpreted and duly questioned. This is then due to a wide gap between the ideal and the real, between ideology and practice.

The intellectualisation has had another and most probably unintended side effect: the avant-garde has become almost obsolete. Whatever the Modern Movement really called for, one result has been the elimination of many boundaries, not only in art and popular culture but also in ways of living.

#### SUMMARISING COMMENTS

What a term actually means – *langue* – and what it has come to mean in spoken language – *parole* – might have more or less important implications for its



users and the context in which the term is used. Concerning tradition this difference has proven to be a vital cause for it being regarded as the antithesis to modernity. In consequence, the trademark of modernism; 'break with traditions' or 'detraditionalisation' has remained generally uncontested until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Will it ever be manifested if the modernists intended to break with traditions in any other sense than as a fixed form? The emergence of cultural studies as an academic discipline has contributed to revaluing tradition and the verdict is that detraditionalisation is impossible. Traditions are embedded in culture and more than one thinker sees contrary to for example Giddens and Beck, traditions as a way to come to terms with the risk society: confronted with a multitude of options, traditions act as a guide.

A new or renewed consensus on tradition thus concerns its importance as conveyor of valuable knowledge, which means that the interpretation 'handing over experience' has been updated. The introduction of the notion traditionality, which is emphasising action rather than content, is further reinforced when tradition is viewed as a resource.

Is it possible to make use of traditions in an un-reflected manner? The conservative stand in defence of tradition called it *wisdom without reflection* or *superior to human reason*. This might have been another reason for attacking tradition: rationality was put in doubt. Though concluding, there is reason to turn to Schön (1983) very briefly in an attempt to shed more light on the problematic of thinking and action. According to him, un-reflected action has risks. 'Practice becomes more repetitive and routine' and we stop to think about why we are doing what we are doing and do not consider what happens in the world around when we act. We must not only think about how we act but also about how we think.

Is routine un-reflected or is it learned and then applied without further reflection? If we presume that un-reflected action is a result of human ways of being, something that *just comes naturally* it is likely to have inner motives. If on the other hand, a routine is part of our way of living, it might lose its sense but still be applied, as it has become an embedded experience guiding our action. Understanding Lash, Gerdenryd and others, it is not necessarily about immediate un-reflected reaction but about immediate consciousness: the intentional – or even the mundane – as opposed to the transcendental.

The only logical conclusion to draw from the contradicting messages emanating from the modernists is that they wanted to break with traditions in the respect of un-reflected repetition: the habit of bringing something along without thinking. It is difficult to believe that the modernists in any way contested the importance of experience, as it is basic to learning. Moreover, for them to actually have denied the rational in continuity seems just as unlikely. New research is currently placing even more emphasis on how experience stimulates formal learning. In a paper from the John Dewey project at the University of Vermont, Sawyer (2003) argues that we might even engage in an internal dialogue when we are memorising formal facts and figures and 'experiencing' the book or the lecture in a way that might enhance learning - or the opposite. Experience creates the context in which learning occurs.

Halting to think about one's action and their effects and at the same time analyse the thinking behind is a way to break the repetitive, which no longer is true or relevant. This could well be 'the universality' aimed at by the modernists



when inserting the 'break', which due to interpretation was wrongly directed to traditions instead of to habits and repetitive behaviour.

Dewey's arguments concerning the un-reflected use of experience in judging art is knowingly and for reasons never heard off not discussed with regard to tradition.

Moreover, the significant emphasise on human ways of living as part of the modern movement was not a confused or biased interpretation but the result of a scientific 'truth' at the time: Our social milieu was regarded as more important for our ways of being than what was given biologically. The belief that the ideal could make all the difference in society by changing the real was seemingly a logical consequence and still is to judge by the critique of anthropocentrism referred to earlier in this work.

The rising interest in how reflected and un-reflected actions interact opens up for new interpretations: Gerdenryd's point that also lower capacities of action [the un-reflected] are involved in cognition is of interest not only for design as a cognitive activity but also for how a designed object is perceived. This stresses the importance for designers of learning more about human ways of being. These are given and experience may cause them to be reinforced or weakened, but not basically change.

Tradition is noticeably about to be revaluated as a result of new angles of interpretation. There are reasons to believe that traditions increasingly are judged as an essential resource of experience. Acknowledging this resource is thus a precondition to development as it enhances the understanding of human ways of being and how they adjust to a changing context. The link between timelessness and human ways of being is becoming increasingly evident.

### 3:4 Making an aesthetic judgment

The aesthetic is a cultural as well as a cognitive notion, which means that it has to be approached equally thoroughly in both dimensions. Moreover, it has long been entangled in controversy.

Aesthetic comes from the Greek *aesthesis*, which means perception by the senses. According to Osborne (2000), there was an association between aestheticism and intellectualism in late 19<sup>th</sup> century art, but the notion of aesthetic as freestanding had a very strong grip and has again been strengthened. Referring to the work of Raymond Williams, he points to the opposition between aesthetic and 'practical and utilitarian concerns' and also at the contrast with 'cognitive and intellectual matters' (p. 1). Osborne goes all the way back to Aristotle and Plato in an effort to come to terms with the aesthetic. He considers several schools of thought on aesthetic judgement, and selects three as the most prominent. These are further analysed by Rée (1998) and Menke (1998):

The first has its origin in Aristotle: (i) not intellectual but involving a judgement of sense (meaning that it is not merely sensual). Behind the second [named a sham by Rée] are among others Lessing (mid 1700) and Hegel (early 1800): (ii) a sensual process where the aesthetic judgement is directed via the senses to the body. The third follows Baumgarten's (mid 1700) notions of sensual recognition and the subject actively constituting object-relations and Kant's (mid 1700) and later Husserl's (mid 1800) notions of our relation to the world through a single sense organ, the body: (iii) a cognitive process where the body and mind directs the aesthetic judgement to the appropriate senses.

These schools all belong to the philosophy of art: how art is perceived. Is it the inherent properties of the work, which constitute the aesthetic appearance or is it the social milieu? Is aesthetics culturally determined?

Bourdieu (1984) challenges the notion of a universal artistic value, which transcends history and has little or no reference to culture and politics. This idea of an almost autonomous aesthetic is frequently applied to Kant and his followers. Kant's 'Critique of pure reason', of 1781, was truly controversial at the time as it suggested that human interaction with the world was not totally determined by experience and rationality:

"... in order to know the world at all we must have within us concepts which are not merely reducible to experience or [here referring to David Hume] habit or custom." (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2002, page 120)

The degree to which aesthetic judgment is assigned to *body* or *mind* seems thus to be a crucial issue when trying to define the role of culture and the influences from the social environment in the process. Bourdieu does not argue for a polarised position but is rather underlining that an interaction with the political and economic is inevitable when forming an aesthetic standpoint. Merleau-Ponty, known for approaching Marxism from a human angle, is referred to as arguing for 'pre-reflective and practical participation' (p. 158) in connection with human behavior and thus for an understanding, which goes beyond the subject (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2002).

Postrel<sup>61</sup> aims at taking theories into reality with her book 'The Substance of Style' (2003). She consequently does not look at aesthetics in a philosophical sense but restrains the discussion to the everyday. Contrary to entertainment, she argues, aesthetics do not involve any cognitive engagement: it is immediate, perceptual and emotional. Neither may it be equated with beauty, which she regards as a much more limited notion, even if she does not fully explain in what sense. She indicates, however, that beauty is the reflected version of the visual sense while aesthetics is a judgment, which involves all senses. This judgment is initially the result of a universal reaction but operates, according to Postrel, always in a personal and cultural context. Recognising this is important to her as it reconciles the biological and social attitude to 'aesthetic discovery' and hence gives aesthetic judgement a very dynamic role.

Before concluding this prologue there is reason to include Norman's (2004) 'three levels of design' in the analysis: the visceral, the user and the reflective level. According to him, not only what happens on the visceral level: the immediate appreciation of form and other sensual characteristics is un-conscious, but also what takes place on the user level. Our judgement of performance is immediate. On the other hand, our reflections, the third level, concern meaning and is to an important part culturally determined. This is contrary to Kwinter (2001) and Juliers's (2000) claims that the aesthetic is a construct and totally influenced by culture, as we will see further in section 3.4.4. However, Norman continues to argue: 'If you design for the reflective level, your design can readily become dated because this level is sensitive to cultural differences, trends in fashion, and continual fluctuation'. (p. 67)

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<sup>61</sup> Postrel is an influential US science and business journalist, focusing on the gap between science and society.

Already this first account indicates that there are diverging views on how to account for experience as part of immediate reaction. The tendency has long been to name mental processes involving experience cognitive. As many scholars have argued and as was concluded in the preceding section: only in theory might a subject be isolated from its context. This implies that experience guides every judgment including the immediate. Perception in the meaning of creating a mental image is normally regarded as unconscious<sup>62</sup> but would consequently involve experience also beyond physical sensations. The dichotomy between body and mind might have had a different rationale over time but has proven to be persistent.

### 3:4:1 FROM BEAUTY TO FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

Phrases involving beauty: ‘inherent beauty’, ‘beauty does not age’, ‘timeless beauty’, are used habitually in everyday life despite being an ambiguous notion. Not only do individuals have different criteria when judging beauty but the actual definition has also varied over time. As mentioned earlier, Postrel (2003) claims that beauty is the reflected version of the visual sense.

Kyander<sup>63</sup> (2002) goes all the way back to Plato who embraced rationalism as the apparent path to truth (Sternberg, 1996). Plato appreciated beauty as content; disembodied, ideal: a principle, which humans could only long for. According to Kyander, this was not unproblematic even for Plato. He approached the thought of ‘*beauty being realised in form*’ in his writings although he was regarded as an enemy to poets and artists. Already his pupil Aristotle, who emphasised ‘empiricism’ as the way to gain knowledge (Sternberg, 1996), had a much more pragmatic relation to beauty, which he argued was something humans could experience not only on the idealistic level but also as useful, pleasant and in harmony with its total environment. What Plato and Aristotle – as actually most ancient Greeks – apparently had in common was their conviction that beauty was not only an aesthetical category but also a moral one. A beautiful form without content was reprehensible, concludes Kyander.

It is regarded as easier to change the surface, the style, than to evaluate and change the basic idea accordingly, as discussed in section 3:2:3. The troubled attitude to the issue of form and content has persisted. Styling has consequently evolved into something superficial and even negative, even if there are signs pointing at an ongoing re-valuation.

Kyander asserts that even if beauty and the moral was an intricate issue already in antiquity, the problem deepened during the Middle Ages with its complicated relations to religion, truth and aesthetic. The image of a wounded and emaciated Christ was seen as *the essence of beauty*. This type of beauty had a severe message, probably too severe for people in general in their normal life, often already harsh in those days. Moreover, it is, according to Osborne (2000), a giant step away from Aristotle and his connotation between the beautiful and the pleasant. The appearance of decoration and ornamentation with no allusion to moral does in this aspect seem logical but Osborne argues that the discourse about beauty, aesthetics, surface and content has become increasingly confused, which explains why he and Kyander turn to the ancient Greeks.

The notion of the aesthetic did not come in use until late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was coined by Baumgarten, according to Osborne. Already Aristotle had

<sup>62</sup> Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary uses the expression ‘intuitive cognition’.

<sup>63</sup> Respected Swedish art-critic.

connected 'aisthesis' to 'the pleasures of the senses' though. The judgement of what was morally good was not involved. The separation of form from [moral] content is thus part of the early foundation of what was to become aestheticism. Consequently beauty and aesthetics are not one, even if they often are used as almost synonyms.

Armstrong (2004) regards the aesthetic as what makes us feel initially happy. These feelings are then modified through 'aesthetic education'. This latter involves not only continued encounters 'with various types of beauty' but also reflection on what makes us feel happy and, importantly, not rejected. Armstrong recognises the understanding of beauty as the product of aesthetic encounters, had it not been for his stand on beauty.

Using Osborne's words, these rather 'confused discourses' seem to have had far-reaching effects on design. There is still no accord on the relationship between form and function: if the former or the latter or both encompass the aesthetic. Do decoration and ornamentation enhance or reduce function? Which are the priorities involved: should form follow function or the reverse?

During the modern movement the expression 'form follows function' was successively changed to mean 'form follows usability'. The former phrase, originally ascribed to Louis Sullivan in 1896, nevertheless became a trademark for the Bauhaus school (Marcus, 1995, Sparke, 1998). Marcus quotes Adolf Loos as saying 'the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of all ornaments from objects of everyday use' (p. 47). The modernists radicalised what John Ruskin and William Morris started with the Arts and Crafts movement, as a protest to the indiscriminating ornamentation of their time. This ornamentation was the result of something close to euphoria about what machines were able to do at an affordable price as shown not least at the Great Exhibition in London 1851. Ruskin and Morris, notwithstanding the success of the Art and Crafts movement, were famously criticised for once again giving priority to crafts, which meant products too expensive to buy for most people of that time. Walker (1989) and Sparke (1998) stress that the Arts and Crafts movement was aesthetical as well as social but, though never openly expressed, there is an underlying implication that Ruskin and Morris regarded craft, the carefully handmade objects, as a precondition for a true aesthetic.

While Arts and Crafts like the modern movement emerged from a conviction that ornamentation was not defining aesthetics, their respective followers totally diverged on the issue of what actually made up the aesthetic: For Ruskin and Morris it was the craft itself, for the modernist the function *cum* usability. The more fit for purpose an object, the more beautiful. This is at least one of the most common dogmas ascribed to the modernists and the Bauhaus.

Ornamentation in the mid 1800 had moved far away from the aesthetic ideal of the Middle Ages, 'the emaciated Christ'. Studying Lash (1999), it is apparent that he does not agree that modernism began as a critique of *beaux-arts* aestheticism and the autonomy of the aesthetic. What was to become the actual foundations of modernism started according to him within the *beaux-arts*. The tendencies that *beaux-arts* training was to be preceded by more practical training, the arts to be grounded in the crafts and have a more social aim were already present but only aggravated by the modernist. It was also within the *beaux-arts*, Lash argues, that a more human approach based on the importance of meaning in everyday life was sacrificed for 'pure' aestheticism. Modernism only continued the process with its trademark structuralism and especially formalism. The famous

break with history cum traditions was thus at the outset not a modernist project but had already begun within the *beaux-arts* in its 'adoption of historicism'.

It is not unreasonable to claim that something of the aesthetic ideal from the middle Ages, as described by Kyander, has had a lasting influence, withstanding not only historicism but also critique from within the art. This is possibly owing to the fact that religion continued to have a strong grip on people, as did religious art, for several hundred years. Religion is a foundation for culture and thus retaining certain influence despite secularisation. An aesthetic with its roots in religion might thus still act as one arbiter for good taste or good design, which are used as objective norms. One of the dominant body ideals, being slim to the point of skinny and with obscured eyes, is easy to associate with the image of a suffering Christ. However, this type of aestheticism stands out as rather superficial and autonomous. Few if any would know where this fashion ideal has emerged from and why it has become an ideal.

### 3:4:2 THE AESTHETIC AND THE FIVE SENSES

There is of course unanimity on aesthetics as sensual experience but consensus does not look as if it goes much beyond this point. Ree (1998) interestingly claims that perception is not straightforward. We perceive differently at separate occasions. The object is part of a setting, which also includes in whose company you are when looking at it. Ree continues to argue that the creation of a mental image does not warrant remembrance. He exemplifies with works of art where some give instant pleasure when perceived but are not 'worth recalling'. There is no reason why this should not apply also to designed objects even if they as opposed to art normally are supposed to be of some kind of utility, which ought to be evident at first encounter. There is a strong link to Kwinter's (2002) reasoning on affective capacity here. Objects, which are not worth recalling, have a negative affective capacity: 'blocked or turned inwards'. But the object may still give pleasure at first sight. This is what Dewey (1934) calls 'immediate perception' and he makes it clear, as discussed already, that even if perceived, not just seen, the object might not leave any traces but be rapidly forgotten. Pye (1968) argues along these lines as well.

Comparing the arguments brought forward by Dewey and Pye and combining them with those of Osborne, Menke and Ree, there are reasons to claim that how aesthetic judgement is interpreted is essential for the understanding of timelessness. Perception creates a mental image. Ree argues further that we categorise our sensual experiences based on those that dominate, but this does not mean that the less prominent are not active in the aesthetic judgment. He calls this 'an integrated network of perception' (p. 64) and it is in turn based on Kant's argument that the senses are informed both by the three-dimensional structure of space as the one-dimensional structure of time. Understanding these two structures, the artefact would be allowed to 'roam' within this structure without losing its significance either due to time or experience: it would be worth recalling.

These dimensions became famously separated as part of modernism when the time dimension set limits for an integrated aesthetic judgment. Armstrong's (2004) notion 'aesthetic education' seems appropriate here and to some extent explains the confusion surrounding the aesthetic and aesthetic judgement. You were supposed to learn, not by experience but through tuition, which aesthetic judgement to make. According to Dewey (1934) this is impossible: you can only

change your judgement after additional experience not by being told to. Lash's notions that modernism only continued what was actually started within the beaux-arts get increased relevance through Osborne's reasoning. The *beaux-arts* are in themselves a result of a very slow convergence of art, beauty and aesthetic, where beauty acts as the mediator between art and aesthetic but also as a separator of arts, creating a category, which is judged as 'beautiful'. This might be understood as a verification of the existence of a universal category.

The notion of the aesthetic dates only about 300 years back, as noted above. Beautiful in ancient Greek is 'kalos', which means good and pleasant and it is with hindsight easy to understand how aesthetics as a result of the separation of body and mind emerged as a complementary notion. A focus on the pleasing part as perceived by our senses posed a threat to the content and apparently still does as the conceptual dominates the contemporary art scene. Learning from Dewey there are thus reason to doubt how much of contemporary art will be timeless. A work of art is, according to him, really created 'every time it is aesthetically experienced'. This does not mean that it will be recalled and perhaps be regarded as timeless. Recollection is only realised when the work of art, or object, continuously on repeated encounters inspire "new personal realisations and experience" (1934, p. 38).

The first experience, the immediate perception, is then like a threshold that has to be passed: it does not warrant recollection of the object, but it is a presupposition for it having a chance to be recalled at all. An object, which is not recalled after a first immediate perception might have another chance if more experience is added before the next exposure. Both Dewey and Pye argue that reflective thought has not arisen at the level where art and design begins to exist. That is why you cannot, as stated above, be taught to like an object, whether of art or design. However, you might be told that you ought to like it for example because it is [at least now] of considerable value, which is something totally different. Moreover, a work of art may for a variety of reasons be regarded as typical: for an art movement [even if not enduring], for a period [of special significance to society or a political agenda] and thereby be of value to a museum or a collector. This again is different and might or might not involve an aesthetic experience worth recollecting.

The distinction lies according to Pye (1978) in that a shape might be described but not 'the feel and singularity, which distinguishes it in experience from other similar shapes' (p. 125). This has to be experienced.

### 3:4:3 THE AUTONOMOUS AESTHETIC IN RELATION TO FUNCTION

Perception [which could be translated as *intuitive cognition*] activates our five senses, which in turn initiate physical and emotional reactions. The rational human is judged as being superior to the emotional and our intellectual activity consequently supposed to be ruled by reason. One of the schools on aesthetics, referred to above, states that perception is a cognitive process, involving as well body as mind. A logical but intriguing question ought to be: How is perception guiding our intellectual activities? If perception is intuitive, it is by definition unconscious. Reflection is not possible where you have no awareness. A reasonably informed human being would not agree to our body and mind living separate lives and the aesthetic consequently being autonomous. The same human



being might still be of the opinion that we master our emotional side most of the time, which in fact would indicate the existence of an autonomous aesthetic.<sup>64</sup>

Cognitive theory will be addressed in more detail in section 3:5 but pondering all evidence it is reasonable to claim that the aesthetic is not an autonomous but an integrated quality. The possible rationale behind its construction has already been traced back to Plato and a little more recently to the Middle Ages. Kyander suggests religious undertones for beauty, which might have affected the appreciation of the aesthetic and contributed to the prevailing ambivalent attitudes?

The German word 'angst' has no adequate synonym in English, as fear and anxiety normally have wider connotations. Angst is about feelings of insecurity and is often used in connection with teenagers as they may have problems admitting how they feel (Merriam-Webster, 2006). There are indications that 'angst' rather than reasoning has kept the aesthetic in quarantine. It is a well-known fact that the class society, which ruled well into the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, was patronising and elitist. As claimed earlier, also the Bauhaus school with its social consciousness was elitist. Part of the foundation for elitism is control. The 'angst' of not being in control of 'the bodily' is likely to have forged an effort to circumstance the problematic of the aesthetic. They thus choose to regard the aesthetic dependent instead of integrated in function and to judge decoration and ornamentation not only autonomous, but also obsolete.

Forgacs (1995) supports this claim when writing on the Bauhaus and argues that Gropius had a deeper awareness than most of his colleagues and fellow thinkers. She reminds us that before the start of industrialism, architects and craftsmen were considered to be artists and followed an accepted ideal where art and architecture went hand in hand. The movement within the *beaux-arts* to include the aesthetic within the form and thus make it part of reality, actually resulted in art breaking away from architecture and craft. This is probably also the reason for art never becoming part of design at the Bauhaus. Gropius (Forgacs, 1995) fought until he left the school to integrate these two. He wanted the artists to bring aesthetic values – which he saw as a presupposition for quality – to mass production. He famously did not succeed. What came in its place was a polarisation where at one end, physical function defined the aesthetic of the object and at the other end, art was guided by ideals, or at least messages, and claimed that beauty lay in the message rather than the aesthetic. This might appear slightly bizarre but coincides with the way the modernists argued about aesthetics. The term *beaux-arts* has now been replaced by fine art or merely art.

What began as a critique of aestheticism and the autonomy of the aesthetic, resulted in these notions successively emerging as even more pronounced and *problematised*. Considering the above it becomes more apparent why modernism induced fascination with *ways of living* but distance to *ways of being*. Lash (1999), here drawing on Adorno, questions whether 'a modernist humanism is possible'? For Adorno, a Marxist thinker, purely aesthetic practices were both undesirable and impossible. Lash does not analyse Adorno's stand in

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<sup>64</sup> Sternberg (1996) describes two fundamental approaches to explain perception: constructive (intelligent) or direct perception. Current alternatives to these approaches are the result of the realisation that more complexity is involved what concerns the sensory data as well as how this is used.



detail, but according to Duttman (Osborne, 2000), the underlying cause for this stand was probably Adorno's critique concerning 'philosophy raising the claim to be scientific in order to be credible' (p. 74). A cognitive approach, as opposed to a cultural or humanistic approach, opens aesthetics to scientific research.

Adorno's motives might be ambiguous as he was in fact constantly challenging notions concerning what was given by nature. He was possibly merely setting the boundaries of his own discipline [philosophy] when he made it clear: an autonomous aesthetic is impossible for reasons to be explained scientifically and not for reasons, which were desirable from a cultural, a social or an economic point of view.

Returning to Lash, the question of a human modernism or a modernist humanism is more likely to be linked to the redefinition of aesthetics done by the modernists [as claimed here] than to the modernist idea as such. With this redefinition it became fairly easy to transform the modernist project into a style, *a way of living* rather than a *way of being*, which also is what Michael (2002) claims in his essay on Banham. An important question to pose here is whether the idea behind modernism as in conflict with humanity? Was it not rather its application? Changing our ways of living without much regard for ways of being is to try and *manipulate nature*. People as disparate as Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1930s and Andrea Branzi in the 1970s has challenged this 'inhuman' project, Wright (Hanks, 1979) is quoted as saying: 'Nature can never be changed, but we have learnt and are still learning how to use it in new and better ways' (p. 239). Branzi stated (Burkhardt & Morozzi, 1995) that there is 'a whole generation of designers, who think their role is to change and manipulate nature for the benefit of humans' (p. 29). Frank Lloyd Wright is often mentioned in connection with what is called humanist modernism. Adorno is according to Lash using the term 'facticity of things', to describe what we can change, like materials, which 'are never given in nature but always historical and social'.

The notion of the autonomous aesthetic has thus had considerable consequences for art and design, not least as it denied a strong link between the sensual and the intellectual in creating affect. Well-reputed design theorists and practitioners like Gropius, Wright and Branzi have all if with differing points of reference approached the necessity of integrating aesthetics in the quality of artefacts. The confusion nevertheless still prevails.

#### 3:4:4 AESTHETIC AS A CONSTRUCT

Would modernism have continued as a project if it did not mean benefits for humans? Would the designed heritage from the modern movement still be so influential if it was inhuman? Julier (2000) writes about what he calls 'the aesthetic illusion'. What looks useful is understood to be. The semantic of the product itself establishes this illusion. Depending on cultural context objects is assigned special meanings (Palmer, 1996, Coumans, 2005). According to Julier myths are constructed around products and they become fetishes (drawing on Marx) or at least signifiers (drawing on Baudrillard). Myths are of course constructed by communication within society: by individuals as well as through mass media. Referring to Haug, Julier argues that the aesthetic does not have an effect other than merely decorative when it comes to both the product semiotic and to the semantic. Their performance remains the same while their external [semiotic] appeal changes. This reasoning agrees with that of Kwinter on affective capacity: what makes it possible for an object to take on new meanings as it flows

with time. The difference here is that Julier [and Haug] states that the aesthetic has no crucial role for the meaning of an object, for its role as a signifier whilst Kwinter suggests that the less fixed *the form* [he doesn't specifically mention the aesthetic], the better the affective capacity. Kwinter introduces Kafka as one of the first and most prominent thinkers on the relation between objects and time: '.. the world of objects itself need not change in the slightest, only the meaning and the relations between them' (p. 146)

An interpretation of Kwinter's quest for a theory of modernist culture, reveals that he to a certain extent avoids the problematic of aesthetics by regarding it not as autonomous but embedded in culture and also *separated from the its expressions*. What he appears to imply is that *the aesthetic is a phenomenon in every culture but that its expressions, the aesthetic judgement, change over time*. This is probably a correct interpretation as he later in the text also proposes that: (i) aesthetics is a way to overcome the time element and (ii) our perception of the aesthetic has changed with the modernist project<sup>65</sup>.

Kwinter's theories diverge from earlier conclusions here concerning the relation between the social and the natural and their respective dominance. As a result of early 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism, the social has long been regarded as determining the major part of individual human development, which is here called ways of living. Research challenged this theory during the 1990s as mentioned earlier and provided evidence that the biological human, ways of being, was at least as influential (Uddenberg 1998). For Kwinter however the aesthetic is a social construct and can be manipulated.

In summary Julier and Kwinter both seem to put in doubt that aesthetic judgement influences timelessness, from which follows that timelessness would be about fixed forms. Julier in particular denotes aesthetics as decoration while Kwinter does not see any relation between aesthetics and affective capacity. Durability should consequently be the result of enduring semiotic appeal, either as a meaning or a capacity to take on new meaning.

According to Couman, semiotic analysis takes place on three levels: (i) the aesthetic comprising perception of structure and shape, (ii) the referential where the mental image is created and (iii) the discursive which is a synthesis of the first two. Admitting that there is not enough evidence she argues in favour of a culturally determined aesthetics: Is it relevant to speak of a universal aesthetics, can a piece of art speak for itself without regard to the spectator's cultural background?

This question brings to the fore Postrel's (2003) suggestion of an aesthetic judgement starting with perception based on universal reactions but gets modified due to cultural and personal context.

Semiotic research in general adheres to the stand of Coumans: it indicates rather than defines aesthetics as culturally determined. Reported impressions from an exhibition in Paris in 2005 might here serve the purpose of hinting that the matter merits additional exploration. The exhibition brought together objects, including toys and instruments, from all over the African continent as well as the Scandinavian countries. Stemming from different times and exposing a variety of colours and patterns they were arranged as still life without any contextual

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<sup>65</sup> The founder of Italian futurism [where also Sant'Elia was a member], Marinetti wrote in the Foundation Manifesto: '...the concrete world is inseparable from the industrial and scientific technologies that arrange and are arranged within.' This was not only a break with the past but represented an attitude devoid of reference to aesthetics (Kwinter, p. 54-56).

reference. According to the organisers the idea for the exhibition came as a result of the curator Li Edelkoort's visit to an exhibition focusing design from Africa, where she experienced striking similarities with Scandinavian design. A survey among visitors to the Paris exhibition revealed that visitors had genuine problems distinguishing the objects cultural background. The choice of a 'still life' exhibit provided intentionally a mainly aesthetic experience.

### 3:4:5 MODERNISM AND THE AESTHETIC

Before concluding this section on aesthetics, there is reason to return to the prevailing, intense discourse on modernism and its emphasis on form follows function. Within the modernist movement there was less unanimity on this matter than is normally understood. Returning to Marcus (1995), there are several examples of the *form follows function* device not telling the whole story. Starting with Deutsche Werkbund, Gropius and later the Bauhaus, there appear never to have been consensus on the truth of this causality. Hermann Muthesius<sup>66</sup>, otherwise a radical, stated in an article 1913 (Marcus, 1995, p. 54):

'.... The idea that it is quite sufficient for the engineer designing a building, an appliance, a machine, merely to fulfil a purpose, is erroneous, and the recent often-repeated suggestion that if the object fulfils its purpose then it is beautiful as well is even more erroneous. Usefulness has basically nothing to do with beauty'

Gropius also emphasised the importance of form but called it 'an intellectual idea' (p. 55) equating it with geometry, which initiated the Bauhaus' trademark preference for the square, triangle, circle, cube, sphere and pyramid. Individual objects for the catalogue of the exhibition 'Die Form' in 1925, which were to demonstrate the aesthetic of anonymous industrial forms, in reality had to be handmade for a complete illustration. All the preferred shapes were still not apt for mass-production. Le Corbusier was however persistent on the issue of aesthetics through usability and possibly the most insisting why it is to him the modern movement owes the, as it seems, forever adhering label: form follows function.

In an article on *perfection*, Michl (1991/92) argues that to aim at timelessness is to aim for perfection. Functional perfection, what the modernist called '*true design*', was regarded as immune to market forces. It was an objective ideal, which had nothing to do with the taste of the users; it was an objective as opposed to subjective aesthetic solution. Le Corbusier, according to Michl, believed that certain objects like wine bottles, pipes and guitars had reached their state of perfection and that others would follow. Michl regards this issue as 'wishful thinking' and concludes that there is no necessary connection between what our products do and how they look. With this statement he is probably entering dubious ground. There are indications<sup>67</sup> that the recognition of form is important for perception and for un-reflected, immediate behaviour. Recognition also shortens the time for reflected behaviour. However, the proponents of 'functional perfection' never succeeded to explain what it really meant and Michl

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<sup>66</sup> Muthesius was a German envoy sent to London to study developments in English architecture. He made the works of Ruskin and Morris known to radical Germans. His reports are said to have influenced among others Gropius.

<sup>67</sup> Evidence will be presented later in this work.

is likely to be right when suggesting that by being ambiguous [concerning the meaning of functional perfection], the functionalists retained an aura around their work, which is still present in design: users do not really understand their vision, not even when it is manifested in objects. The designers became the arbiters.

Dormer (1993) also tries to understand the place of the aesthetic in the Bauhaus ideal. He regards Max Bill (b. 1908), the Swiss-born pupil of the Bauhaus, to have organised his thoughts in a way, which stimulates new thinking and allows further conclusions (p.59).

‘Objects in daily use’, says Bill, ‘should have a harmonious expression of the sum of its function. What we specifically perceive as form, and therefore as beauty, is the natural, self evident, and functional appearance.’

Dormer here takes hold of the emphasis on ‘natural’, which he regards as revealing. To look natural, according to Dormer, is the same as the often referred to design talent of knowing what ‘looks right’. It is not immediately evident what he means, even if one interpretation would be: what looks natural does not obstruct the eye; it is designed with regard to its natural or intentional context. Dormer further mentions this ‘natural look’ as a quality of much of the anonymous, artisan design which may date several centuries back. These designs, the vernaculars and the utilitarian, were also a fascination of Le Corbusier, but he regarded them as proofs of the causal theories concerning beauty and function, some of them reaching object-type status as mentioned above. In consequence, as Dormer ironically remarks, he ignored the competence of anonymous designers behind. The beauty was a strict result of function, not of the designers’ contribution. This socially conscious designer Le Corbusier thus demonstrated certain disregard for the talents of ordinary craftsmen.

Marcus (1995) and later Michael (2002)<sup>68</sup> uses the critic of modernism, Reyner Banham, to explain why and how functionalism came under heavy fire in the late 1970s. In his essays from 1960, Banham rejects the universal, according to him, laws of form and accepts the throwaway economy. As part of his argument he establishes his definition of timeless: ‘Eternal validity’. Only 11 years before Papanek’s ‘Design for a Real World’, a well-regarded designer like Banham, advocates that objects should have a short if useful life and be designed accordingly.

‘It is absurd that these objects should exhibit qualities signifying eternal validity – such as divine proportion, pure form of harmony of colour.’ (p. 154).

He does not further define what is divine and pure but suggests that this is what modernism in general and functionalism in particular is about.

Early opponents to functionalism as well as later critics appear themselves to have difficulties explaining what function is and moreover functions relation to aesthetics. Muthesius and Bill are no exceptions as their statements mainly concern function and beauty. The very old definitions of ‘beauty as good and [morally] pleasant’ and ‘aesthetic as the sensually pleasing’ are though straight and ‘simple’ evidently not accepted.

One complication to these otherwise seemingly straightforward relations is the issue of aesthetic as a construct. Is it possible to be taught by media and other forms of communication to experience an object as ‘sensually pleasing’?

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<sup>68</sup> See p. 53 earlier in this work.

Returning to Dewey, he argues that the senses can be trained [through experience] but never taught. 'Aesthetic education' would thus be impossible, depending of course on how aesthetics is defined. On the other hand, education concerning what is good and morally pleasant [beauty] is at least possible as these judgments are not sensual. They are value-based and thus culturally determined (Lash, 2003). When Banham hints that functionalism is all about manipulation; to make people believe that pure form asserts good function, he is consequently denoting experience as an arbiter of form as well as of function.

#### SUMMARISING COMMENTS

Theorists and practitioners in art and design are still struggling to find the place for the aesthetic in their work. The causes are manifold but appear to basically have their origin in two dichotomies: (i) the body and the mind and (ii) the social and the natural. Both have resulted in the aesthetic being judged as autonomous.

The separation of body and mind goes all the way back to ancient times and Plato. It has a philosophical and religious rationale, which was undoubtedly underpinned by a lack of scientific reasons at that time. The comprehension of bodily reactions was limited and they consequently induced anxiety, which in turn initiated something close to a stigmatisation of the body. Sensuality posed a threat to self-control. Beauty, which originally meant good and pleasant, gradually retained and expressed solely the moral dimension, which actually bedded for the notion of the aesthetic, which dates back to the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The belief in the social milieu as foremost determining our identity has a political signature dating back to when capitalism was first challenged. Equality could be achieved by creation: change to the economic system and social reforms. The biological self, the natural and the given, played a minor role in self-identity. Aesthetics as sensual experiences were problematised as a result of the emphasis on the social. Aesthetics was considered as the result of function during the 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism. This attitude is still prevailing even if no longer uncontradicted.

Less contradicted is the suggestion that the aesthetic is culturally determined. The existence of some kind of *universal aesthetic* is often doubted although there are indications of its relevance. Notions like 'aesthetic education' and 'the aesthetic as a construct' is basically proposing that sensual experiences can be manipulated, taught and learned. This argument has also other historical references and Anderson (2005) analyses the notion of 'Aesthetic Dogma' and how a few arbiters dictated *good taste* and ruled interior decoration in the 1880s England. Aestheticism is thus equated to taste instead of taste being one result of aesthetic experiences.

It is of major importance for the understanding of timelessness to learn if aesthetic judgement, as a result of sensual experiences, is mainly culturally determined. Culture is often regarded as bound by time and space with aesthetic judgment accordingly looked upon as less significant for the meaning of an object: the same object is judged differently with time while retaining its performance. The aesthetic is here reduced to semiotic appeal with a signifying rather than sensual role.

Timelessness should thus be the result of high 'affective capacity', an objects ability to take on new meaning with changing context. Assigning aesthetic judgment an inferior role in the meaning of an object is contrary to Dewey's

description of the aesthetic experience as a precondition for the creation of a mental image. This is what warrants recollection, not perception as such, according to him.

Judging aesthetic experiences, the sensually pleasant, as integrated in the quality of an artefact is not a later day creation: indeed Aristotle argued in favour of this, which now has become a cherished design strategy (Jordan, 2000). Human and user-centred design approaches have been developed and design of pleasurable products and emotional design are much in focus.

The confusion concerning the aesthetic and aesthetic judgment still seems to persist and not least carries the burden of aesthetic dogma. There are reasons to believe that the dichotomies, body-mind and social-cultural, are still partly in place. The aesthetic is undoubtedly recognised as a cultural as well as a cognitive notion. What this means in practice with regard to how human ways of being is interacting with ways of living does not seem to be dually addressed: the approach looks as if to be either or: cultural or cognitive.

### 3:5 Perception and the immediate

Pye (1978) calls aesthetics “*the philosophy of the perception of beauty*” (p. 96). A designer himself, he decided that design, like abstract art, does not address the intellect but is still very powerful. This standpoint might cause confusion as it could be interpreted as design acts merely on the visual level and in a cultural dimension. These reductive approaches pose a threat to understanding and are open for misconceptions in a way that was argued in the summarising comments of the preceding section. The statement above merits the question: is there then something like an intellectualisation or *the cognition of beauty*? Few of us would oppose to the suggestion that a person might well appeal to us by immediate perception; we make an aesthetic judgment, which results in appreciation. When we get to know this person, his or her aesthetic appeal might be enhanced and we are now talking about beauty. The appeal might also be degraded by intellectual encounter and beauty seems then far off.

Pye does not reason accordingly: ‘Beauty is a particular kind of experience, which cannot be explained. The cause is still unknown.’ He continues (p. 100): ‘It is about the effect of the scene on the viewer.’ This latter point coincides with Dewey’s observation that a work of art might be judged differently depending on with whom it is experienced. Further arguments pursued by Dewey (1929, 1934) on perception and the immediate respectively on cognition and the intellectual diverge on many points from those by Pye. Dewey regards even immediate reaction as resulting from experience but on the unconscious level, as pointed at earlier. Interpretations of his work show a certain lack of congruence, but he is even so experiencing something of a revival in the ongoing change of direction in cognitive theory.<sup>69</sup> The new directions have in large developed from the two fundamental approaches described by Sternberg (1996) and referred to already in section 3:4: (i) constructive perception and (ii) direct perception:

- Perception is the result of all senses being employed and ‘funnelled’ into action (Lave, 1988, Capra, 2003: ‘the Santiago Theory of Cognition’)

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<sup>69</sup> The authors referred to in the list are describing directions, not necessarily advocating them. It is furthermore important to note that the change of direction is not universally embraced.



- Perception can either be ‘short and reflexive’ or ‘sustained and reflective’, depending on the amount of experience involved (Forlizzi, Disalvo & Hannington, 2003, Dewey, 1934)
- Theoretical normative models of cognition lose their predicting power when moved to everyday settings. Cognition is about lived experience. (Lave, Capra, Gerdenryd, 1998)
- The long prevailing very scientific view on cognition, resulting among other thing in theoretical models, is essentially the result of the artificial division of body and mind: ‘the Cartesian Heritage’ (Capra, Armstrong, 1961)
- There is no such thing as objectivity [which is what cognitive science attempted to arrive at] (Dewey, 1929, Capra, Johnson, 1987)
- Affect and cognition is in constant dialogue (Clark & Fiske, 1982<sup>70</sup>, Bastick, 2003)

### 3:5:1 PERCEPTION AS THE RESULT OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

The change of direction in cognitive theory appears mainly to concern the final uniting of body and mind and thereby the recognition of the importance of lived experience. Even if the topics of design and emotion currently are in vogue, as put by Forlizzi and her co-researchers, emotion is not the only affective state in communication with cognition. Simon (1982) points at other important factors: mood and valuations, which are associations to [‘cognitive labels’] object or events, which are positively or negatively valued. Simon, like Dewey, argues that there are patterns of associations between cognitive valuations and affect: experiences, which have become part of yourself and therefore guide our immediate perception. It is the presence of experience, which according to Simon cause misconceptions as this in cognitive theory normally means that the intellect has to start processing the information.

Forlizzi, Disalvo & Hannington, are unknowingly exemplifying Simon’s observations when talking about ‘emotional statement’ as short and reflexive as opposed to ‘emotional experience’, which is sustained and reflective. This confusing differentiation was discussed earlier in section 3:3 of this chapter in connexion with the natural attitude [to tradition]. In their work they also argue that it is very difficult and frustrating from designer’s point of view to make use of information about the emotional associations people are expressing in their relationships to subjects. This does not come as a surprise after studying Wilson (2002) and following his reasoning on the adaptive unconscious: self-insight by introspection is difficult as it means making the unconscious conscious. Drawing on among others Damasio (1994) he explains that our brain or mind has evolved to work ‘largely outside of consciousness’ and a better way to learn self-insight is to observe our behaviour. This is why someone from the outside is able at times to tell what is going on inside by watching your reactions. The associations people express present at best metaphors as they cannot access there inner self. These limitations in participatory design have already been discussed in section 3:1 of this chapter, concerning the interviews made for the IKEA Live Wisely project.

Returning to Simon, his arguments are further supported by experiments carried out by Blackler, Popovic and Mahar (2003). Their findings suggest that relevant past experience is transferable between products and probably also

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<sup>70</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Carneige Symposium on Cognition



between contexts. Users who found products consistent with their expectations could use them intuitively: with no or very short delay<sup>71</sup>.

Damasio's conducted with his colleagues experiments on the interaction between emotion and reason in the brain. The results are regarded as groundbreaking. They found that damage to the prefrontal cortex, which is the emotional centre, severely hampered decision-making. In the experiment, players were asked to choose cards from four decks. Without being too obvious, two decks were made more rewarding than the others when playing for money. As the game continued, players showed by their performance that they had understood the advantages of these decks and further on into the game they were able to explain how it worked. The players were attached to devices, which measured responses detectable through reaction in their skin<sup>72</sup>. Long before they improved their performance the device showed markedly increased levels of palm sweating when their hands approached the losing decks. An unconscious warning system was apparently in place. Players with damage to the emotional centre of the brain did not have the same reaction. As the game proceeded they realised that some decks were a bad choice but still continued to draw from them. Not only did players with brain damage lack the 'early warning system' or intuitive feeling, they showed marked signs of making decisions, which were not in their favour. (Wilson, 2002, Morse, 2006) The experiment showed that our conscious mind often is much slower than the unconscious when it comes to making judgements, but for these to be 'good' the emotional centre of the brain has to be intact. Damasio's continued research on patients who had damage to the prefrontal cortex due to removal of brain tumours confirmed that this badly affected their capacity to direct focus of attention and make decisions.

These findings are challenging and therefore merit re-thought not solely concerning decision-making but also on human reactions and actions in more general. Morse argues when reporting from observations within psychiatry that unconscious does not mean inaccessible: by continuously noticing our own emotional reactions and also the decisions we make as a result of these we will be able to learn how these reactions are instigated. This coincides with Wilson's proposal on how to achieve self-insight. We may also learn from other people's reaction to our behaviour. These immediate reactions are by evidence part of their unconscious and not of a personal agenda, which might be the case with a narrated version.

The ideas referred to here are by no means uncontroversial. The dilemma facing designers are two-fold: (i) correctly interpret their own reactions [when faced with a task] and judge user reaction [when faced with a concept, a prototype or a product], (ii) accurately evaluate their own un-reflected [or reflexive] response to a design task in the continued reflective part of the design process. Is one's intuition or *gut feeling*<sup>73</sup> to be trusted? May a designer's own immediate 'first solution' be a guide for *how to arrive at a positive immediate reaction by user perception*? Evaluating intuition Bastick (2003) focuses to a great extent on

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<sup>71</sup> Immediate behaviour is defined as reaction within 300ms to 3 seconds (Newell 1987).

<sup>72</sup> "skin conductance", which measures the minute level of sweating and is an indicator of arousal or emotion (Wilson, 2002)

<sup>73</sup> *Gut feeling* is a popular term for intuition but seems to have a certain acceptance even in formal language, preferably written in Italics. Wilson (2002) uses the term throughout his reasoning. He moreover introduces '*feel good*' to describe a state which indicates that the *gut feeling* is correct. Both terms will be used in this work with reference to Wilson.

its correctness. He admits that intuition is often wrong in technical cases where the subject has inappropriate or no experience or what he calls ‘feeling model analogies’ (p. 324). There are according to Bastick, in all four common distortions: (1) the interaction between the perception and the emotional set<sup>74</sup>, (2) empathy, (3) lack of innate sensitivity, (4) incomplete knowledge (like the technical referred above). There is evidently no mediation between the immediate reaction and the sensory experiences: it is a direct line. A further complication is according to Sternberg (1996) that intuition is constantly interfering with knowledge throughout the reflected [design] process. Whether this is to be viewed as a complication or an opportunity is a matter of judgment. Each particular situation poses the most likely specific demands. Furthermore, general accuracy is not always necessary, according to Bastick. A ‘workable fit’ (p. 332), which is adequate only for the present situation might be sufficient. On the other hand, when common feeling and not logical similarity is the criteria, what he calls ‘allo-logical’ (p. 333) errors may occur: association with salt when you see a pudding as someone once put salt instead of sugar in one.

### 3:5:2 GENERATION OF A DESIGN IDEA

The discourse on how a design idea is generated involves not only cognitive psychology but also embraces formalised design methods. These started to become very influential around 1960 and were developed with the aim to make the design process more defined. Linear route maps outlined the order of the steps in the process. These have lost some of their relevance and Lawson (1997) suggests a model where the three activities analysis, synthesis and evaluation are in constant negotiation throughout the process reflecting the problem as well as possible solutions. Generating ideas and concepts is considered the fun phase of the design process and constitutes a fairly wide [and early] part of the funnel that is this process according to Jones (1966). During this phase creativity is allowed to flow while rational thinking has to be in place to eventually arrive at a single design solution. In Jones’ terminology, it is in this transformation stage that ‘a complicated problem is turned into an easy one’. This transformation is of course necessary, but the gradually diminishing popularity of design methods suggests that too much information was lost in this process. Every aim to make a solution fit its purpose contains a risk of sub-optimisation.

Constructs like *intuition* (mysterious) and *creativity* (abundant) do not yet seem to be well established in academic discourse. This has called for them to be de-mystified and explained, which has been addressed by the new directions in cognitive psychology reported and discussed here and concerning intuition, in particular by Bastick. However, the remark that these are regarded as controversial and not generally accepted merits attention.

There is a wide acceptance of scientific talent in general: doubts concerning the relevance of rapid understanding of relationships between figures and the resulting causality are rarely heard. However, there is much less factual acceptance of talent in areas, which are less scientific and where causality cannot be determined. To give one example: fast identification and understanding of norms, values, symbols, signs and the likely outcome of their interaction. Taking forward the reasoning by Damasio, Bastick, Wilson and others, it is correct to call

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<sup>74</sup> For a detailed explanation and description of the ‘emotional set’, see further page 144.

*both* types of talents intuitive: based on stored experience. The type and amount of information stored is determined by exposure but also by the individual brain.

This suggestion is not new but need to be elucidated. Love, referring to Bastick, argues that we consciously and unconsciously perceive our internal imagery representation of situations. He is here talking about an affective effect, which is shaped by our experiences and memories and might well be unconsciously stored. This information guides our decision-making processes and the notion 'rough intelligence', elaborated by Nordström (2002) is appropriate here: the guiding is sometimes so strong, depending on the nature and intensity of experiences and memories, that it resists normal socialisation. Love chooses to call it 'affective cognition' and is further referring to Damasio and Rosen to strengthen his argumentation that non-rational thought must underpin rational thought. The idea that knowledge interferes with intuition is hence not as controversial.

Understanding these arguments, a designer could well bring the first, immediate idea along in the continued design process. A personal experience, which came as some kind of revelation, might shed special light on this matter.

A tour to southern France some years ago included a visit to Vence (close to Nice) and the famous chapel decorated by Matisse. The decoration, in blue and white, features events from Jesus' life. All the pictures are very 'simple', almost sketchy - but then not - because the lines are very strong and confident. In a room in the back, visitors are allowed to learn about the process behind the design. Matisse apparently had the idea that the only way to do this decoration with regard to context and purpose, was to make it very easy to understand and therefore clean, like the chapel itself. He then realised that this could not be done without first sketching every picture he had immediately recalled from his mind in considerable detail. Why? Direct perception is, as pointed out by Forlizzi and her research colleagues, strong on information about the self. This bias has to be recognised and Matisse might have found one way of doing it: his next step was consequently to study these pictures and verify that they could be easily understood before starting to reduce them back to the simplicity they had when they first appeared in his mind. By this method he tried to make sure that they did not lose their ability to communicate the essence of every event to the visitors.

There is reason to continue the pursuit of how ideas are generated. Timelessness might be inherent in the generated idea as part of the lived experience, which according to the arguments above by definition is centred on the self and would need further consideration. How is this addressed in various concepts dealing with the generation of ideas?

Lawson introduces the concept of 'primary generators' and is referring to research by Darke who after interviews with architects concludes that a very crude design is initially made to examine and develop the problem. This crude design is a '*primary generator*' or first idea, which subsequently is used in the funnelling process to narrow down the number of possible solutions to the design problem. Applied to Matisse above, his primary generator would have been the images expressing explicit simplicity, which first occurred to him as a way to balance context and purpose [the chapel is small, aimed at improvised private prayers and reflections]. His detailed drawings would further have meant a development of the problem where finally his primary generator was the instrument used to narrow down the range of solutions.

Another discussion concerns '*design fixation*' and addresses the problem of premature commitment to a design solution. The problem is described by Purcell and Gero (1996) and based on research [on industrial designers] after a theory developed by Jansson and Smith in 1991. According to the authors, designers could use either of two mental models in their approach to a problem: 'object space' and 'conceptual space', where the first is concrete – or tangible – and the other abstract. A fixation with the first often prevents the designer to move into the 'conceptual space'. This is where he might be able to find alternative solutions by considering abstract knowledge; rules, principles, other concepts and further experience. They argue that a fixation in object space will moreover prevent the designer from finding a solution to another but similar problem. Staying in object space would mean focusing on difference rather than on alternative solutions. Being trapped in 'conceptual space' would on the other hand hamper the realisation of ideas. Purcell and Gero conclude that when designers get fixated in either space it appears to counteract innovation. Designers have to move out of the object space and into the conceptual space [and then alternate between the two] to find solutions that bring about real change, not just difference.

Jasper Morrison reveals in an interview (Boyer & Zanco, 1999) his own earlier *fixation* in what could be called 'object space' made him give priority to difference. His moment of truth came when he realised that the much-hailed Centre George Pompidou in Paris [by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano] was different rather than innovative. Yes, tubes and systems for ventilation and other crucial functions can be put on the outside to leave more space inside the building for its core purpose. This is different, but no, this is not innovative if the designer has not made this freed space better fit for purpose. According to Morrison, the wide spread expert opinion is that the Centre is as impossible from a display and exhibition point of view as ever an old hall at a museum, though its main purpose is to house exhibitions. The same would go for Lloyds Bank building in east London: all the services are hung on the outside to free space for uninterrupted financial dealing inside even during maintenance. This is innovative if the freed space is made better fit for its purpose.

Also Andrea Branzi (Burkhardt & Morozzi, 1995) has brought to the fore how since modernism we have been pre-occupied with new technological solutions as the sole factors in bringing about change through innovations. When in fact, if we are to believe Purcell, Gero, Morrison, and others, these solutions, the object space, are the base for innovation only if combined with knowledge from the 'conceptual space'. Furthermore, a technological solution might be 'reused' in the generation of more ideas and thus form the base for additional innovation.

The third concept concerns interlinking ideas. Goldschmidt and Tatsa (2005) report on previous research and are also conducting their own, both mainly based on 'Linkographic' studies applied to protocols from design sessions. The ideas in the protocol, which had more than a certain threshold number of links with other units, were appointed critical. A distinction was also made between 'moves': if the links went back to 'previous' ideas or to the fore creating 'new ideas'. Participants in the sessions quickly abandoned ideas, which did not create enough links. They became subordinate and got no attention. This research is still on an early stage and needs to be further developed to produce evidence if this is a method to identify 'good ideas'. However there is interesting resemblance between 'linking ideas' and 'moving in and out of object and conceptual space'.

Lived experiences as a result of direct perception appear to be a critical factor in the generation of [design] ideas though not universally accepted. These experiences are by definition stored in the unconscious and become manifested through the ideas they generate, which consequently will be informed by experience of human behaviour and human reactions, generally as well as more specifically. This is according to Fulton Suri (2006) not enough: first hand observation of people is a prime source for inspiration in design and development of design thinking.

Participatory design and its limited validity, as explained by new cognitive theories, have been addressed earlier. User centred design is notwithstanding an applicable concept but a developing critique is focusing on the difficulties of transferring results from laboratory settings to the real world. It is with reference to these settings the comment '*knowledge interfering with intuition*' seems relevant. Fulton Suri suggests that we talk about human-centred design instead.

Studying human behaviour in general, what she calls 'thoughtless acts' is according to her a superior method to generate ideas, which results in useful and lasting products but also services and environments. She is head of human factor design at IDEO and thus is able to illustrate with practical examples: to watch how [western] people normally handle a book might generate ideas, which are useful in a totally different context, in this case when designing a defibrillator. With the book-form replicated, the handling became familiar even if the object was not. It is moreover likely to retain its significance as long as there are books. Fulton Suri is eager to point out that it is not all a matter of familiar forms and good function though. An object or a design must connect to our feelings in a positive way. Her practical experience has confirmed that it is sometimes more informative to observe behaviour than to ask people to describe it: 'actions really speak louder than words.' (p. 174) She further refers to Fukasawa on this issue of learned but unconscious knowledge, which he calls 'active memory'.

#### SUMMARISING COMMENTS

New directions in cognitive science have revived the relevance of lived experience, which in turn has meant a change in the definition of intuition. This notion, until now seen as representing something unreliable, has commenced to be accepted as an expertise, even if on a personal level. The correctness of intuition is according to Bastick dependent on if the subject has sufficient experience although this cannot be accessed consciously as it is deeply embedded in the self. Due to this strong relationship with the self there are reasons to regard conscious interaction with knowledge as a precondition of avoiding un-reflected generalisations. One way to obtain this knowledge would be by observing other peoples un-reflected behaviour, drawing on Fulton Suri and what she calls 'thoughtless acts'.

The concepts for how ideas are generated coincide in important details even if they diverge in approach. They represent varying levels of formalism as methods though. Lawson's notions of 'primary generators' and 'crude design', as Purcell & Gero's point about premature commitment are all addressing the strong impact of lived experience, when arguing about first ideas as guides rather than determiners. It is here appropriate to suggest that the importance assigned to repeated alternation between object and concept space is in fact equal to linking ideas. Goldschmidt & Tatsi regard links as signifiers of critical ideas. Fulton Suri's description of a practical approach to human-centred design serves as

another illustration of the notion of space. She also points to the important unconscious recognition of form (object) and to the crucial connection to feelings (concept) as a way to develop design. Three of these approaches, excluding Lawson's, emphasise how ideas might be constantly *recycled* or used alternatively through association [expanding space and making links]: the idea might be found to originate from something which already exists. Fulton Suri exemplifies this with the inspiration sometimes to be found in vernacular and ingenious solutions, as they have already proven to be enduring.

The analysis in this section has improved the understanding of how timelessness might be achieved: enduring solutions are mainly realised by ensuring their affective competence, which is made possible through combining personal intuition with the study of un-reflected human behaviour.

Moreover, with the analysis [in the cognitive dimension] of the notion of perception, a more complete image of *experience* emerges, which further adds to the conception of aesthetics.

## CHAPTER IV. Reconstruction

### 1. Deconstruction revisited

Chapter III has focused on the deconstruction of *the timeless*. This process was initiated by the assumption that *the timeless* is a construct, which primarily has to be analysed in a *philosophical perspective* (Friedman et. al, 2002) although the subject of this research is *the physical object*. This has prompted a simultaneous exploration of the timeless in a *physical perspective*. Continued research in these two perspectives gave prompt directions to a third perspective: *an affective*.

Applying a philosophical perspective resulted in a first step (Osborne, 1995) in a thorough analysis of the conception or the notion<sup>75</sup> of *time*, while applying the physical perspective lead the research into the subject area of sustainability and the notions of *to sustain* and *to waste*. Through the analysis of these three notions: time, to sustain and to waste, with regard to the timeless the necessity of applying also an affective perspective became immediately evident (Papanek, 1971, 1995, Kwinter, 2001). The exploration of *to sustain* and *to waste* showed more explicitly *how* humans are inclined to deal with the durability of physical objects than *why* [they act as they do] (Hill, 2002). This analysis provided although references to the importance of further insight concerning *why* (Blincoe, 2004, Walker, 2003, 2004). These references offered not only a link to *the aesthetic* but prompted the addition of the *cognitive* dimension. Even if the issue of *how* [humans act concerning to sustain or to waste] has an apparent focus on *materiality*, this dimension proved difficult to apply without also considering *immateriality* (Phillips, 2003).

The analysis of *time* directed promptly to *tradition*. These two notions emerged as closely interlinked, which pointed to the significance of applying a *cultural* dimension (Osborne, 1995). A substantial part of the analysis of *tradition* concerned *detraditionalisation* (Lash, 1993, 1999, Heelas, 1993) and modernism. The trademark idea of modernism 'form follows function' provided another link to *the aesthetic*. This notion proved not only to be complex but also complicated and socially as well as politically sensitive (Dewey, 1929, 1934, Pye, 1978, Osborne, 2000, Rée, 2000, Postrel, 2003)

Finally, the separate, if interlinked, analyses of to waste, to sustain, time, tradition and aesthetics with regard to *the timeless* and *timelessness*, all gave direction to *perception*. Very few issues concerning humans can of course be given attention without discussing cognition: the function of the mind. The deconstruction did not aim at confirming the evident but to further explore the relevance of cognition in a wider context, including the cultural and the material dimension (Damasio, 1994, Gerdenryd, 1998, Wilson, 2002, Bastick, 2003).

The figure below (fig. 2) illustrates the deconstruction by graphically manifesting the relations between (i) the notions, (ii) the perspectives and (iii) the dimensions.

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<sup>75</sup> As emphasised already in the introduction to chapter III, *notion* is in this work consequently used in the meaning of *conception*. The notions are not analysed and explored as terms but in their capacity to 'form or understand ideas or abstractions'. (Merriam-Webster, 2006).



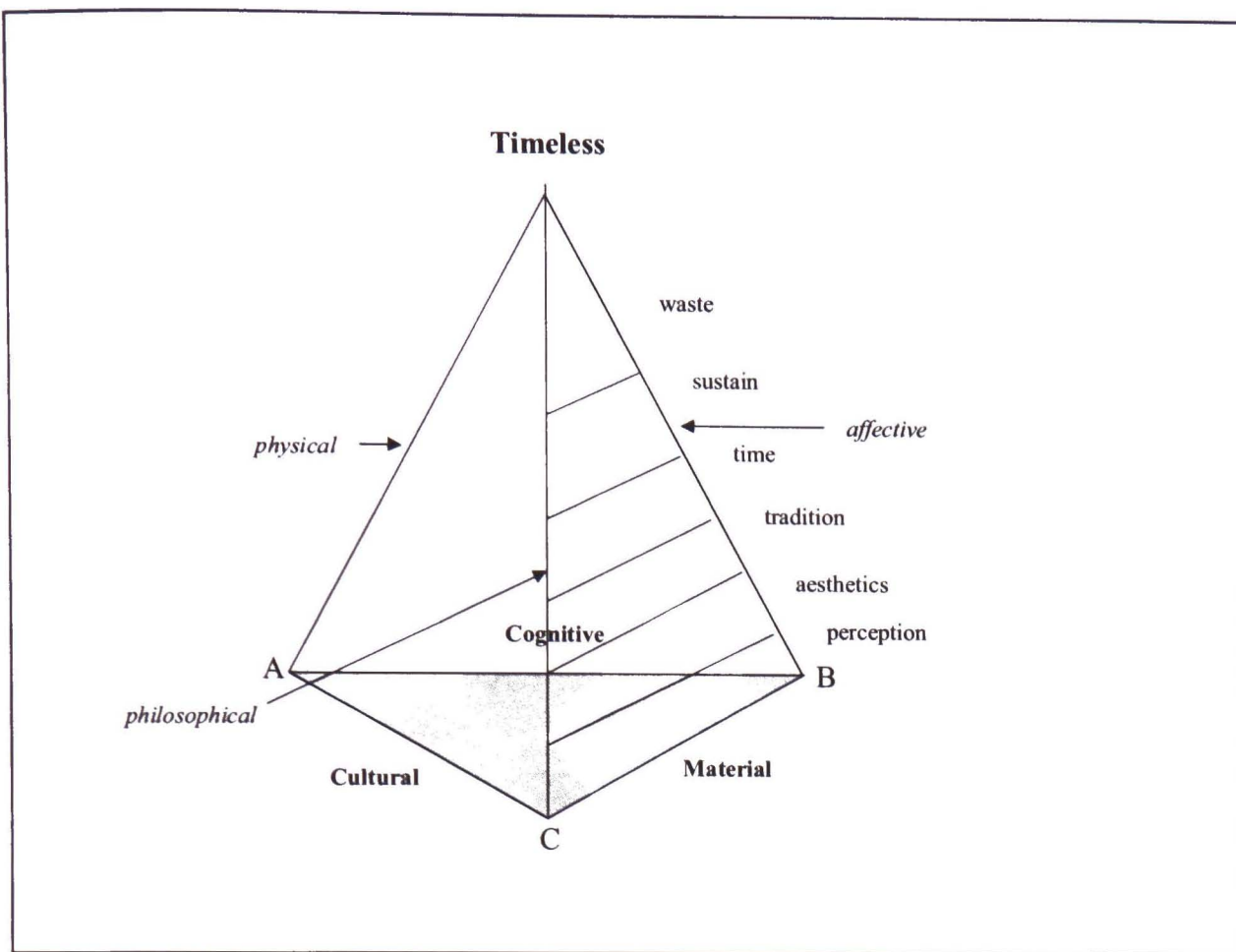


Figure 2

Formulating the grounded theory on the basis of this analytical exploration is similar to *a reconstruction of timelessness*. Each step in the deconstruction is summarised throughout chapter III. The essence of these summaries, reoccurring and coinciding variables [A, B, C, fig. 2] are labelled, *factual essentials* below, section 1:1, and make up the core of the theory. The conceptual categories and statements, which are applied in the investigations, which are reported in chapter V, are likewise developed from these factual essentials. A brief recapitulation of these, as they appear in the summaries throughout the deconstruction, follows below.

## 2. Factual essentials

### 2:1 To sustain or to waste

There is apparently not sufficient accord on how waste is produced to deal with the issue constructively. *Beliefs appear divergent rather than convergent*: (i) *attachment to objects produces waste* – as does (ii) *detachment*. The resulting strategies on reducing waste: (i) designing products that are anonymous versus (ii) designing personalised products, may consequently be less efficient as they risk to level each other out. *To waste* and *to sustain* is most commonly discussed and analysed in the material and cultural dimension, with recycling and fashion [in the meaning of being up-to-date] the reoccurring themes in reverse. The idea of *cultural waste* is introduced in this work to describe what is turned into waste due to fashion or built in obsolescence. Timelessness is frequently judged as being personal and linked to nostalgia (for example Marchand, 2004, Maccleanor, 2005). Several authors make references to the cognitive dimension, which is vital to the understanding of the product-user relationship. Forlizi, Disalvo & Hanington (2003) is only one example. However, it does not appear to be

addressed as a prime concern even if Hill (2002) speaks about products, which ‘take care of you’ and Papanek (1995) in his writings argue that products ought to have also ‘humanistic and spiritual content’.

One exception lies within architecture where Alexander’s notion of ‘pattern language’ (1979) has been interpreted in a variety of ways, most of them however emphasising the important knowledge to be composed by studying what in society has individually survived over time. Maccleanor (2005) describes a language that ‘talks about shared experience, a shared memory and an ordinariness’ (p. 102) and claims that the link between timelessness and nostalgia is inevitable, which again suggests that what constitutes *the timeless* is a personal issue or at least mainly sentimental as opposed to real.

So far there is only scattered evidence to judge in favour of *timelessness* existing beyond the personal: the link between *the timeless* and *regard to nature* (Dunn, 2004), is not to be understood as necessarily ‘ecocentric’<sup>76</sup>, but as creating *a entirety* of nature and object in the eye of the beholder. This would in fact be an ‘anthropocentric’ approach serving ‘ecocentric’ purposes (Birkeland, 2002, Hill, 2002).

On the other hand, the analysis of *to waste* and *to sustain* has indicated the significance of applying an affective perspective not only on sustainability but on timelessness and has furthermore pointed to the resulting relevance of *human ways of being* (Janson, 1998, Nylander, 1999, Andersson, 2003, Philipps, 2003).

The timeless could therefore be looked upon as *the affective competence* within sustainability.

## 2:2 Time

The deconstruction of timelessness in a philosophical perspective points to the need to differentiate between *a time*, *an era*, and *over time*, which can be considered *a process*. Furthermore, *now time* and *new time* ought not to be confused (Osborne, 1995).

Fixation on eras [by definition] counteracts timelessness and moreover encourages a focus on *human ways of living* [as opposed to ways of being] as signifiers of a certain time, this era. A process, on the other hand, is normally illustrated by flows. This would enable a distinction between the temporal, fixed to an era, and the surviving, flowing through eras, within patterns of living. That an object survives, assuming it retains its significance, implies neither it being eternal nor static but rather the opposite: flows are dynamic and an object in the flow is adaptable contrary to changeable (Kwinter, 2001). Applied to humans, this refines the idea of *ways of being as the adaptable* and *ways of living as the changeable*. The genetically determined human, the biological, is currently assigned a more influential role than sociological research had earlier claimed, according to Uddenberg (1998). This recognition has its roots in a rising awareness of the biological human’s capacity to adjust as a matter of survival and comfort. Adapting and adjusting are unconscious processes but initiated by experience (Damasio, 1994, Wilson, 2002).

In general, to understand and to analyse *the process of time* more thoroughly than the eras is likely to be as significant to the recognition of timelessness as is the *distinction between adaptation and change*.

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<sup>76</sup> See chapter III, p. 47 for the explanation of this concept.

### 2:3 Tradition

Tradition has in everyday language taken on the meaning of something static, which is applied for reasons other than relevance. This interpretation contradicts its origin: *referring to what is handed over*, and has had vital importance for the handling of the past as part of modernisation. Tradition was, and to a certain extent is, judged as an obstacle to change. Valuable knowledge and experience are consequently likely to have been wasted and lost. The continuing re-valuation is based on the assumption that traditions have, through the ability to flow with time, already proven their relevance, not least concerning methods of learning about human ways of being (Heelas, 1993, Lash, 2003). A different dimension of tradition, *traditionality*, introduced already by the philosopher Ricœur, has thus achieved renewed actuality (Osborne, 1995). This is an attitude to traditions on the level of action: considering them rather than applying them without discrimination. The latter would be traditionalism, which is about content rather than action. Critics of this stand (among them Schön, 1993) argue that traditions are used without reflection and risk becoming repetitive. Opponents of this stand claim that repetitive behaviour is rather habits, which differ from traditions as they are personal and may change (Campbell, 1993) or resist change (Bastick, 2003) but rarely adapt.

Schön's stand mirrors an interpretation of the un-reflected as not only a 'lower capacity of action' but also as being without rationale. This is increasingly contested as a result of advancing research within neuroscience and cognitive psychology (for example Damasio, 1994, Bastick, 2003). The concept of *lived experience* [as opposed to learned] described earlier, is one result of this progress.

The persisting troubled agenda concerning the reconciliation of body and mind is having a negative impact on the relevance of traditions. The recognition of *tradition as both lived and learned experience* is, however, important for the understanding of timelessness as is also to *differentiate between tradition and habit*.

### 2:4 Aesthetics

There are strong indications that aesthetics are neither totally culturally determined nor universal (Rée, 2000, Armstrong, 2004). It is more likely that the aesthetic is a *universally defining factor* in the interaction between the human and the artefact (Postrel, 2003). As a defining factor it seems to work like a threshold, which has to be overcome or passed before there is any chance of recollection of the artefact (Dewey, 1934). We are here speaking about a sensual threshold, which means that it is neither reflected nor solely emotional. Merging the views of Dewey and Wilson (2002) implies that lived experience, either in the form of traditions or more recent cultural influences, should thus refine or mould this threshold in an continuing process, which is for the most part unconscious.

In which respect lived experiences change the way we define artefacts aesthetically is not entirely evident. Human beings are prone to adjust and adapt to facilitate survival, as mentioned earlier. Facilitation demands simplification and it is thus a logical assumption that experiences, which develop our aesthetic sense work on the level of simplification. This is, however, not to be confused with simplicity, as recollection, according to common knowledge is facilitated more by

the presence of conspicuous characteristics than the absence of these according to Bastick (2003).

Judging something to be beautiful appears to be an everyday reaction, seemingly un-reflected, to an aesthetic experience: a way to express a feeling. However, beauty has also a moral, reflected component, which will not be immediately evident. (Menke, 2000, Kyander, 2002). Postrel regards beauty as some kind of reflected version of the visual sense. To use the French word *parole*<sup>77</sup> would probably be correct here to explain why beautiful is applied as a synonym to aesthetic. This confusion would have an impact on design on the level of sophistication: not only a product's appearance but also if its purpose and function is immediately evident is crucial for its addition to lived experience, which takes place un-consciously. Beauty as a learned experience works on a higher level of sophistication, which involves the meaning of a product and its contribution to a preferred identity. Beauty has therefore a stronger presence than aesthetic in the cultural dimension.

The dichotomy of body and mind, surface and soul persists, which has contributed to a continuing debate concerning the role of the aesthetic and aesthetics not only concerning 'form follows function', but for a product functioning in general terms and including its durability (Norman, 1998, 2004, Julier, 2000, Kwinter, 2001).

The analysis of the aesthetic has been influenced by conflicting knowledge. Even though, there is reason to judge *aesthetics as conditioning awareness and the understanding of an object*. Moreover, *the aesthetic is less influenced by culture than beauty and consequently more significant to timelessness*.

## 2:5 Perception

In general, the boundary between perception and cognition is no longer as sharp as was once understood. The foremost reason is that within cognitive theory there is now recognition if not consensus on *lived experience*<sup>78</sup>: the realisation that the unconscious also makes use of experience, which earlier was recognised only for conscious acts (Sternberg, 1996) This finding has consequently caused intuition to be re-defined: it is a judgement based on lived experience and therefore difficult if not impossible to explain rationally: it influences our actions but is not accessible. The rationale here works on the unconscious level. Lived experience guides not only "thoughtless acts" (Fulton Suri, 2005) or acts of 'lower capacity' (Schön, 1983)<sup>79</sup>, where the rationale is of minor importance to the person acting, but also actions of 'higher capacity' where the rationale might appear incomprehensible to the actor and is commonly referred to as intuition.

Experience on the conscious level is then *learned* and the rationale behind judgements and decisions is here accessible.

Indications of interaction between lived and learned experience have over time instructed various descriptions of how this may work without fully

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<sup>77</sup> The French words *parole* and *langue* were introduced in academic discourse by the French philosopher Derrida to explain how spoken language successively may distort meaning, see further chapter II.

<sup>78</sup> This concept has been frequently discussed throughout the preceding chapters of this work. It was introduced by Dewey already in the 1920s (1934).

<sup>79</sup> Schön speaks about higher and lower capacity acts but makes no references to lived experience.



recognising its real nature: a constant dialogue between the un-conscious and the conscious. As formulated by Bastick (2003): 'What is generally called analytic thought is like all thought interwoven with our intuitive processes and cannot exist independently.' (p. 51)

The analysis of perception appears to confirm that *timelessness is a lived experience*, which eventually could be confirmed by learning but never taught. As *part of our intuitive processes*, timelessness would suffer from the same errors and distortions as these (Bastick, 2003), which explains the result of various research on how ideas are generated (Purceel & Gero, 1997, Lawson, 1997, Goldschmidt & Tatsu, 2005) showing a need to confirm immediate ideas by comparisons to earlier experience.

### 3. The grounded theory: a reconstruction of the timeless

The theory is, importantly, based on the factual essentials above. It has three main components represented by A, B and C in figure 2.

A: The interaction between human ways of being and living.

B: The distinction between lived and learned experience.

C: The recognition that objects in varying degrees have immanent affective competence.<sup>80</sup>

In principal, the theory takes into account timelessness as a phenomenon linked to an artefact or an object.

Whether timelessness can be achieved by design is the focus of chapter VII and based on the applications reported in chapter V and further concluded in chapter VI.

For the purpose of this research, the theory is divided into four underlying conceptual categories.

#### 3:1 The theory

*The phenomenon of timelessness is a lived experience and consequently works on the affective level and is significant for human ways of being: These are not changing but adapting and adjusting to a changing human context resulting in altered ways of living.*

*To be sustainable, an object or artefact referred to as timeless must therefore have an affective competence: The ability to address human ways of being notwithstanding their constant adaptation.*

#### 3:2 The conceptual categories

These categories are found to be vital to the process in which human ways of being adapt:

- *Time* because we live in it and therefore have to relate to it.

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<sup>80</sup> The choice of the denomination *competence* instead of *capacity* might need an explanation as the latter has figured several times throughout the deconstruction. The motive is to be found in the former being better understood as 'having properties enabling it' and 'a readiness to undergo transformation'. (Merriam-Webster, 2006)

- *Traditions* as they are handed down implicitly.
- *Aesthetics* as it is a sensual experience.
- *Perception* as we do not think when we perceive.

These categories have to be looked at from two perspectives: (i) the object or the artefact itself and (ii) its creation.

Is it relevant to pose the question: *What does a timeless object look like?*

If the grounded theory is true, this question cannot be answered. Timelessness is a lived experience and every example would be just that, one example. It would moreover have to be thoroughly analysed, as the judgement, timeless, might be a result of learned rather than lived experience. The properties enabling an object to adapt are most likely not to be expressed in certain universal forms or even physical characteristics.

*How to create a timeless object?*

Following the response to the first question, it would not be possible to present a model or even a method for the creation of these objects.

Bearing the grounded theory in mind, the appropriate question to pose would instead be: *Is it possible to enhance timelessness by considering defined explanatory parameters in the design process.*

### 3:3 The conceptual statements

As part of the reconstruction the four categories have been expanded into conceptual statements, which could be regarded as hypothetical parameters:

1. *Time is a process rather than a series of defined eras.* Ancient, modern and new signify relevance rather than time. *Now* is likewise regarded as a mediator between past and future.
2. *Traditions are experiences and not orders or truths.* Traditions are viewed as more dynamic than static.
3. *Aesthetic and beauty are not one.* The difference is between an immediate and a mediated sensual experience, as well as between less and more cultural influence.
4. *Intuition is the result of experience and contains valuable information.* Direct (un-reflected) perception results in ideas and behaviour to be considered in reflected decisions and solutions.

#### SUMMARISING COMMENTS.

Forming the conceptual categories and expanding them into conceptual statements is an important preparation for the three investigations undertaken in the applied part of this research reported in chapter V. The categories are the search tools while the statements are the references.

## ***Bridge to part three:***

### ***From the timeless to the affectively sustainable From phenomenon to concept***

The deconstruction of the phenomenon of timelessness was complicated by the ambiguity the actual denomination induces. Correctly, timeless should be used mainly in a philosophical sense, as mentioned earlier. Instead the denomination has become everyday, not only commercially and in popular writing about design but also in academia, where cultural studies and design history represent two examples. Timeless is however rarely used in literature within art and design theory, where it is instead substituted with frequent paraphrasing. These have, as far as possible, also been considered in the deconstruction to avoid leaving out relevant information and to identify all parameters, which ought to be taken into account.

The inherent limitations, within the term *timeless* in describing and explaining the phenomenon, have become increasingly evident during the cause of the deconstruction, culminating with the reconstruction: the formulation of the grounded theory.

Even with a more holistic approach in place, the existing terminology poses in itself a risk of limiting further development of sustainable design and the pursuit of enhancing product longevity. Considering the three perspectives in which timeless is viewed, only the affective gives no immediate connotation: timeless is without doubt an established notion in philosophy and the physical perspective, withstanding time, appears to be well conceptualised by enduring and sustaining.

*Affectively sustainable* is hence a more appropriate denomination than timeless. It in itself describes and communicates a more tangible than implicit characteristic: more a *concept* than a phenomenon.

The grounded theory ought consequently to be partly reformulated:

*Affective sustainability is a lived experience which consequently works on the unconscious level and is significant for human ways of being: These do not change but adapt and adjust to a changing human context resulting in altered ways of living.*

*To be sustainable, an object or artefact must therefore also have an affective competence: The ability to address human ways of being notwithstanding their constant adaptation.*



## **Part three: The Affectively Sustainable**

## CHAPTER V. Application and analysis

### 1. In search of relevance: a new theory or a well-founded concept?

At this stage there is reason to discuss theory making as part of design research. The role and place of theory in design is a repeated subject of debate (Stolterman, 2005). Even if there are voices claiming that design is more of a problem solving than a creative activity, more people probably believe the latter or at least emphasise the innovative character of design. The extent to which theories of design might reduce the space of possible action is an issue, which appears very frequently on the debating agenda. In other words: could theories work as constraints rather than support in designing?

#### 1:1 About making a theory

The issue whether design is a scientific discipline and there exists a design science is related to the question of theory making in design. Stolterman (2005) represents the position, that design is not always science, and admits that this is complicating theory making. Design theories presented as truths, scientifically proven, might hence not only misinform designers but also change the understanding of their role: from creators to adaptors. As a result of this transformation, designers may be likely to feel less responsible for the result of their work. Scientific disciplines like engineering and ergonomics have long contributed to design knowledge, as has more recently also neuroscience<sup>81</sup>. These contributions are important, not least on the level of performance, but are less significant in other aspects. This is not said to diminish the value of scientific theories in design, but rather to point out that they should not automatically overrule other non-scientific design knowledge.

What may then guide the designer on issues beyond science? *User studies* have for some years been assigned importance. There are however no precise answers to the reliability and accuracy of these. They are contextual and thus indicate only one way in which humans may interact with a product under certain circumstances (Lave, 1988, Gerdenryd, 1998). The problematic is well formulated by Willis (2004) in an editorial to Design Philosophy Papers (p. 2):

‘At the same time, such is the nature of subjectivity, that those persons subjected to whatever user-construction is in play at the moment (whether in everyday dwelling in their designed environments or as participants in a focus group being prompted to reflect upon their relation to a particular product) can only act within the limits of what is available to them – as language, resources, materiality, etc.’

Designers ought consequently to have access to a variety of sources, theoretical as well as applied and practical, and be informed by the knowledge these produce.

What seems to pose a problem is whether knowledge as a result of theoretical research, performed outside traditional science, should be defined as

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<sup>81</sup> See further this chapter section 3.

theory (Nelson & Stolterman, 2000). Perhaps we should refrain from theory making and focus on arranging this knowledge as information for the design profession? Stolterman (2005) argues further that such a position is not well developed: ‘The idea that theories can ‘inform’ designers opens up a way of understanding and working with theories that changes the precondition for the paradoxes’ [the definition of design and the definition of theory] He also states that even if there are many advocates for this position, he does not immediately see how it should be implemented in design education.

## 1:2 From a less informed phenomenon to a well-founded concept

The debate on ‘how theories inform design’ is very relevant for the outcome of this work and hence ought not to be ignored. On the other hand, debates of this kind risk partly paralysing ongoing theoretical research: will it be of any use? The conclusion of this research will therefore not be compiled as a theory, which should be proven, but as a *well-founded concept*, which should be well substantiated. The parameters found to inform affective sustainability will carry knowledge and create consciousness, which may enhance rather than restrict design creativity.

Timelessness is a phenomenon, which is *not informed*. On account of the completed deconstruction (*chapter III*), there is reason to judge timelessness as a poor indicator of content: the term gives associations which seem difficult to visualise. Grammatically meaning *being without time*, the characteristic timelessness is actually not to be applied in a physical sense. Interpreters, not least designers, have apparently tried to apply *without time* instead to the function and used objects, which have been denominated as timeless, as some kind of *model*. This is only one example of how something, which is not a theory is used as if it were. The reconstruction (*chapter IV*) undoubtedly suggests something different: Timelessness is *an affective experience*, which certain objects have the ability to transmit. Starck (Morgan, 1999) says that objects having this characteristic carry an “affective code”. This is why they prove to be sustainable. It is thus well founded to replace timeless with *affectively sustainable* (*Bridge to part three*).

A philosophical denomination, widely used outside this domain, is thus replaced by a descriptive denomination. It would be a mistake to draw the conclusion that as we are dealing with something, which is descriptive, it will directly inform the actual design process, the designing. If the description is made as unambiguous as possible through an explanation of its parameters, there is reason to believe it will instead inform the way designers think, which in turn will have an impact on designing. The application phase of this research, reported in this chapter, explores the relevance of the affective sustainability concept rather than investigating it in the scientific sense of the world. The outcome of the applications will therefore not be instructional but rather directional, not only for practising designers but for different stakeholders within the design discipline. Other researchers are an important group among these stakeholders, as the directions given should inspire further research, which might well conclude in a theory. A realistic aim at this stage is to inform those who work in the design discipline about a direction: Which parameters should designers consider enhance affective sustainability when designing?

The prerequisites for affective sustainability, is thus designers' ability, rather than talent as such, to consider a number of parameters<sup>82</sup>, which have been brought to their knowledge. Are these considerations then to be made generally or specifically?

- Generally? Designers should normally or habitually consider these parameters.
- Specifically? The considerations depend on which type of object is to be designed.

Both the general and the specific are addressed in the applied exercises and the continued analyses of this chapter.

### 1:3 Organisation of chapter V

*In search of relevance* is the common part of the headings of sections 2, 3 and 4 of this chapter.

**Section 2. *Linking designers to affective sustainability: a graphic model.*** A straightforward graphic model is used to facilitate the theoretical analysis of the selected 29 designers: *their way of thinking and reasoning* as expressed by them and others (and *not the thinking ruling the time* when they were or are active) has been the criterion deciding their place in a rhomboid model. Coinciding ways of thinking have been generalised into *four schools of thought*, each occupying one section of the rhomboid with the corners as points of reference. Each of the conceptual categories is in turn 'laid over' these schools in an effort to learn the extent to which each concept complies or differs with the ways of thinking defining each school. The method is explained in more detail in chapter II (Methodology and Methods). This analysis explores the general approach and references made to specific objects serve only as examples of general interest. The designers have been selected on the criteria of having minimum two objects judged as examples of *the timeless* ascribed to them by reliable sources. When designers in addition have expressed views about the need to develop lasting solutions, this is a reinforcing criterion.<sup>83</sup> The references used for this selection will not be cited, but listed in a separate bibliography B: *Who is in the frame?*

**Section 3. *Concretising affective sustainability: a fictional online exhibition.*** An online workshop was instrumental in dealing with both the general and the specific approach. A number of respondents were requested to act as curators and choose certain specific objects to illustrate affective sustainability in an exhibition. They were moreover asked to choose one of four possible texts to serve as a general introduction to this. One of the proposed texts being formulated as a compilation of the four conceptual categories while the other three are based on work-hypotheses from chapter III, which were successively ruled out as research progressed.

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<sup>82</sup> As research instruments these parameters are called conceptual categories (chapter IV). They will have the status of parameters when adjusted and finally confirmed by my further research.

<sup>83</sup> This type of selections will always be subjective in one way or another and there will always be reason for critics to question why someone is part of the selection whilst others are not. Helgeson (2006 a) discusses this dilemma in connection with reviews of new encyclopaedias and resource books on design.

*Section 4. Exploring the commercial reality: interviewing.* Three interviews, including two furniture manufacturing companies working at the higher end of the market and one working in the mass-market, were conducted. The interviews structured around the conceptual categories and focused on the commercial relevance of affective sustainability. Issues concerning the life span of products and products icons were closely related to the image of all three companies.

## 2. Linking designers to affective sustainability: a graphic model

This application provided data of type dA: *the design process as designerly ways of reasoning and thinking to aim at affective sustainability* (see further chapter II, section 2:4).

Studies in design history [some literature covering as long a period as the last 150 years and other making references to '300 years of industrial design'] reveals a number of generic headings under which designers and designed objects are listed. These headings are of course chosen on the basis of different criteria, the two dominating being (i) with modernism as a point of reference or (ii) the role of design placed in a cultural, social and industrial context. There does not seem to have been any real effort to classify designers by their way of thinking. Their relationship to craft and industry respectively, often with modernism as a point of reference for time as well as ideas, has become an almost institutionalised form of categorisation. The possibility to learn about designers' way of thinking relies not only on access to reasonably correct information but also how this information is interpreted. This induces an element of personal judgement, which is neutralised as far as possible by comparing the consistency of the interpretations between the different documents used in the study. Solely to break with established ways of categorising designers has, however, a value of its own for the purpose of questioning what today, without reflection, may be regarded as truths. To research into designers' conceptual thinking is, for this reason, probably the foremost way to gain additional information on timelessness from a design practitioner perspective. The assumption is: when established categories (as above) are dissolved, information, which might be hidden behind habitual thinking and what is taken for granted, is made accessible. The conceptual categories are the tools, which make it possible to identify information of relevance to affective sustainability.

The aim of choosing to work with a graphic model as opposed to simply listing the studied designers under a number of [new] headings was to avoid arbitrary categorising, which would appear more precise than it can possibly be due to the nature of accessible knowledge. Listing the designers under headings each representing one of what are here called *four schools of thought* would have indicated an absolute instead of a relative position. On the other hand, applying the name of these four schools to the four corners of a rhomboid allows the designers to be positioned not only in relation to these schools but also relative to each other within the rhomboid. As mentioned above, these schools were arrived at after analysing the selected designers' ways of thinking and working: looking for recurring elements of thought as expressed in words and in designing. These elements appear in combinations, where the most salient have supported the naming of the four schools:

- *Artistic*
- *Humanistic*
- *Rationalistic*
- *Unrestrained*

The designers, analysed here, have all without exception adjusted and developed their way of thinking over time and their position in relation to these schools has thereby changed. Their place in the frame is consequently the result of a weighed judgment. As mentioned above, these schools are the result of juxtaposing and matching the ways the selected designers have been and are thinking, but the schools have nonetheless existed in quite pure forms as part of other well-known historical *movements* at different periods. Some schools moved to a dominant position, probably due to the context present at the time: socio-economic as well as cultural, political and economical. If this dominance became excessive or seemed obsolete owing to changes in the context, a new - or even an earlier - school started to balance it, often as a result of designers re-thinking. An accurate example is rationalism, which seems to have flourished during periods of economic strain whilst anti-rationalism came to the fore when the economy was buoyant (Fiell & Fiell, 1999)<sup>84</sup>.

Though in many ways representing diverse ways of thinking and being active at different times, the 29 designers studied have evidently all managed to create affectively sustainable [timeless] objects.

## 2:1. Four Schools of Thought

This section will explore in three main steps how the selected designers are grouped in relation to these four schools and these ways of thinking.

Firstly, *Who is in the frame* (fig. 3, below) shows how the designers are positioned in relation to each other and these schools. References to the sources of information, which are supporting these judgements, are as mentioned earlier not cited here but are listed in bibliography B: Who is in the frame?

Secondly, under the heading: *Existing obstacles within each school of thought* (fig. 4, below), the dominant contradiction between each school and the conceptual statements is analysed.

The final analyses will concern the trademark or core thinking what concerns the four conceptual categories: *Time, Tradition, Aesthetics and Perception* (fig. 5, 6, 7, 8, see page 116, 117) within each school of thought. The heading states the category.

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<sup>84</sup> The difficulties in denominating design schools is made evident by Fiell & Fiell above, who place anti-rationalism as equal to styling. The choice of the denomination Un-restrained as the anti-pole to Rationalistic is the result of a careful analysis of what anti-rationalistic really implies.



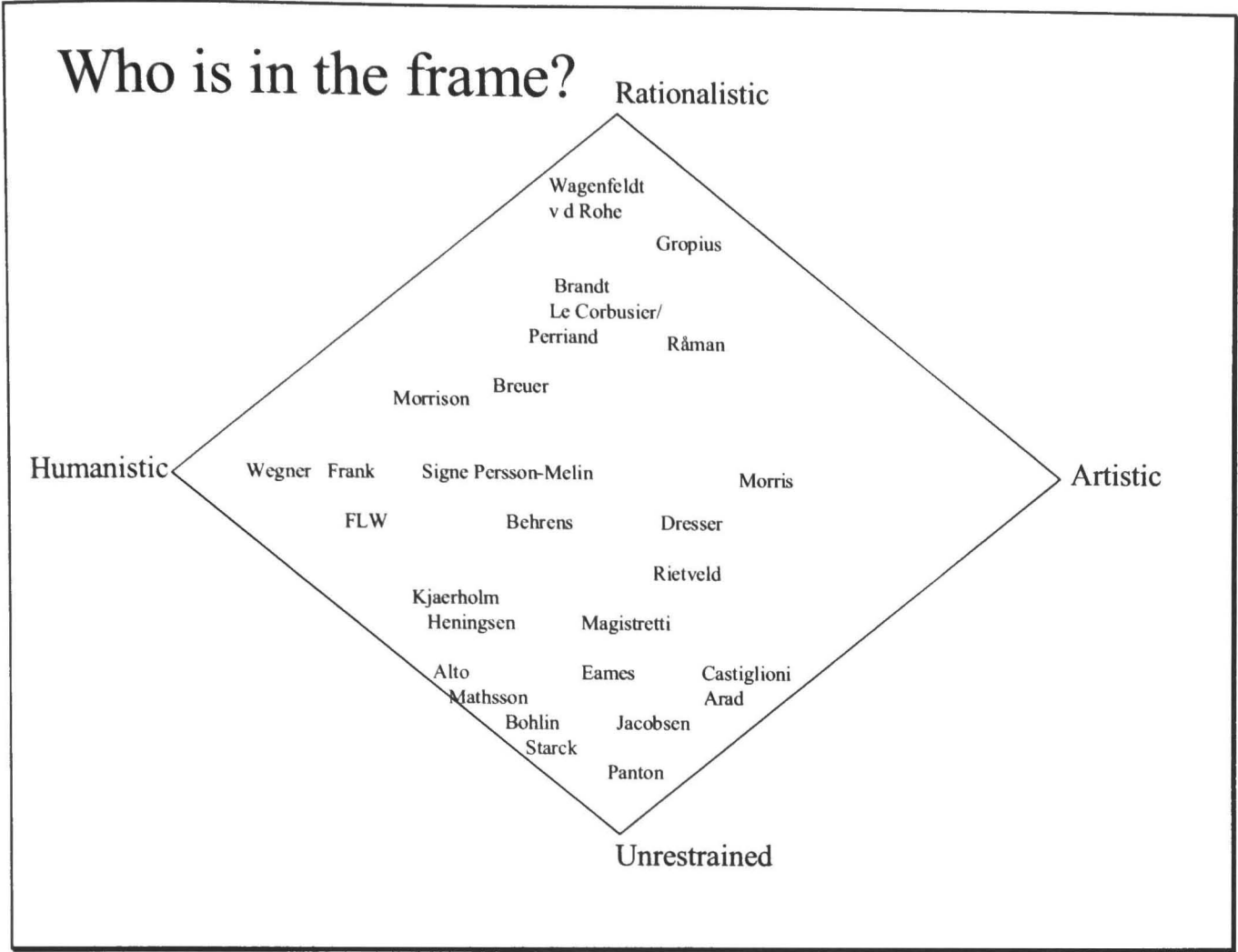


Figure 3.

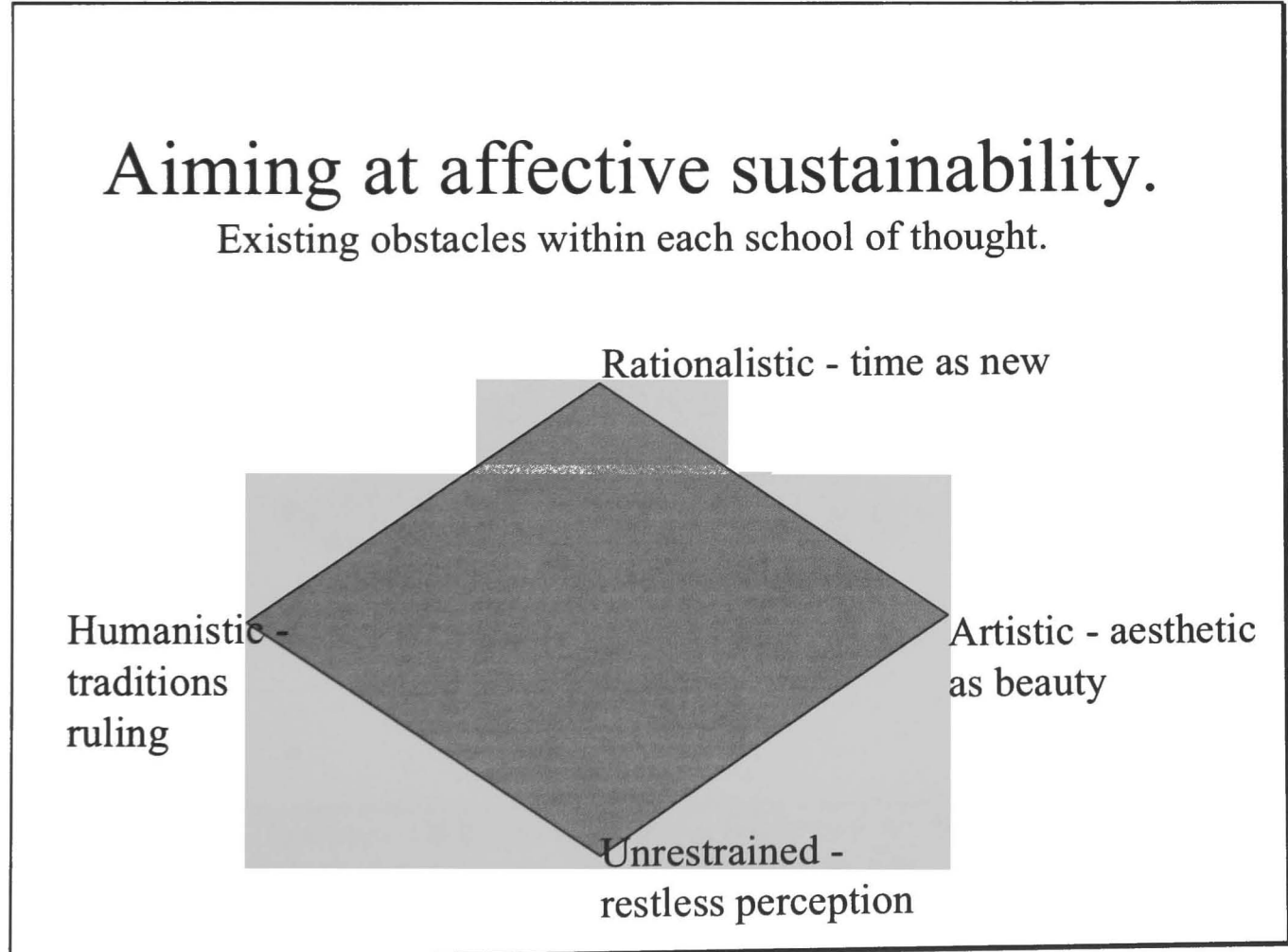


Figure 4

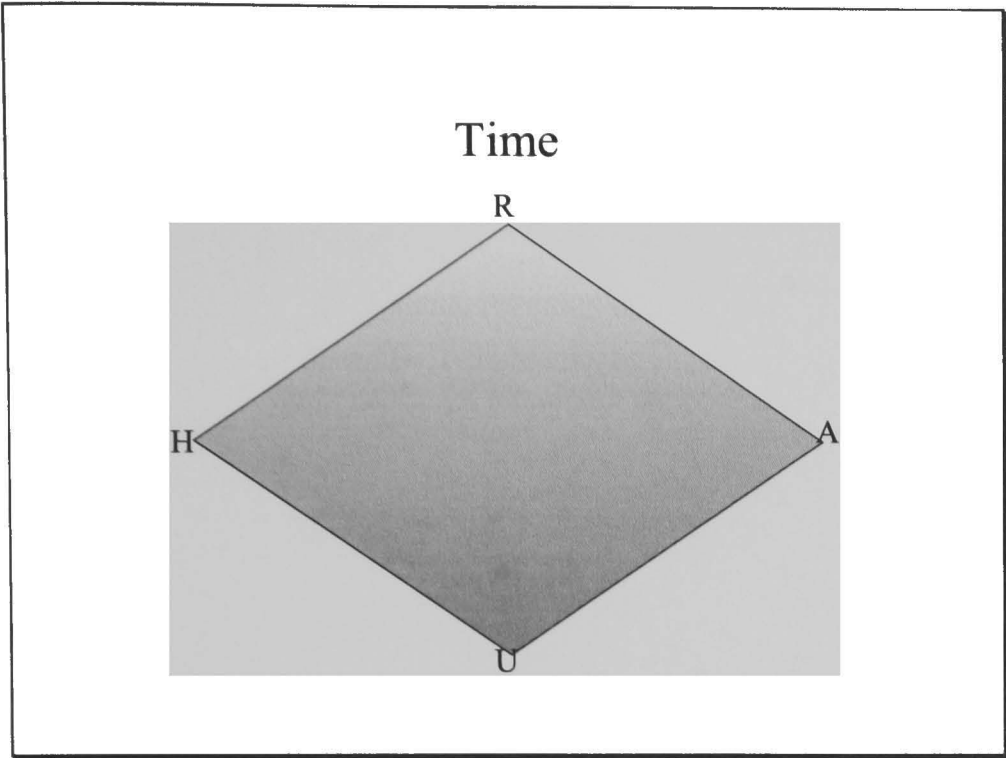


Figure 5. Time. Dark shading marks a philosophy where ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’ are not pursued as key notions.

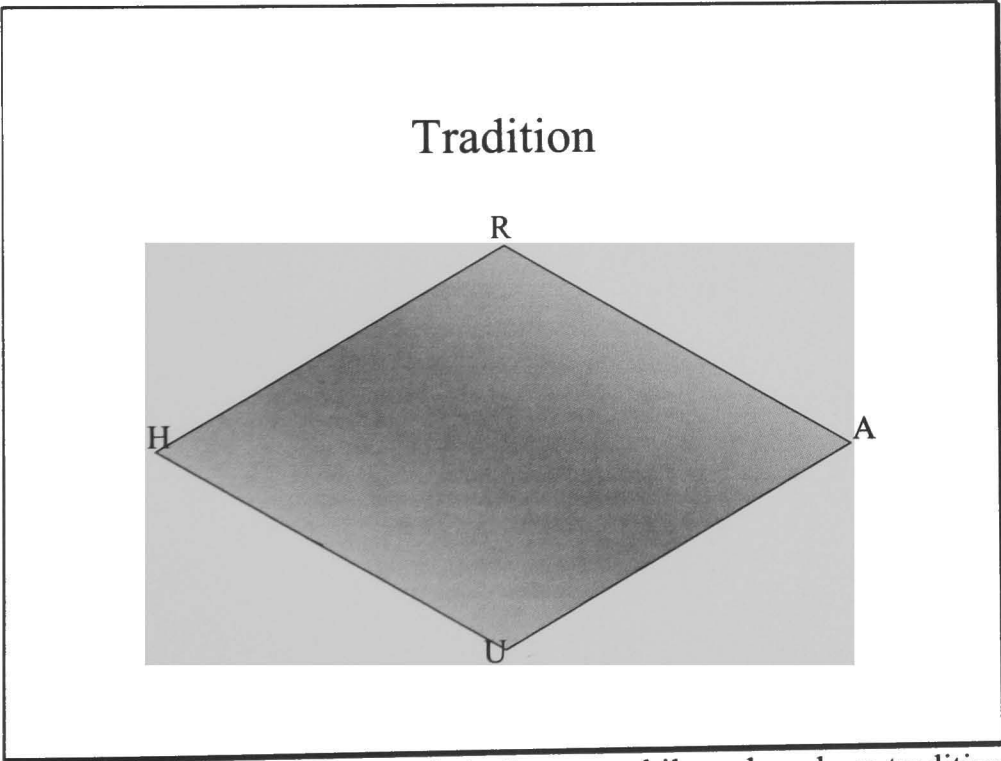


Figure 6. Tradition. Dark shade indicates a philosophy where traditions do not rule but are still present. The overall vague shading indicates that traditions have a consistent presence. If schools of thought close to R have tried to abandon traditions, those close to U have tried to have a free relationship with them.

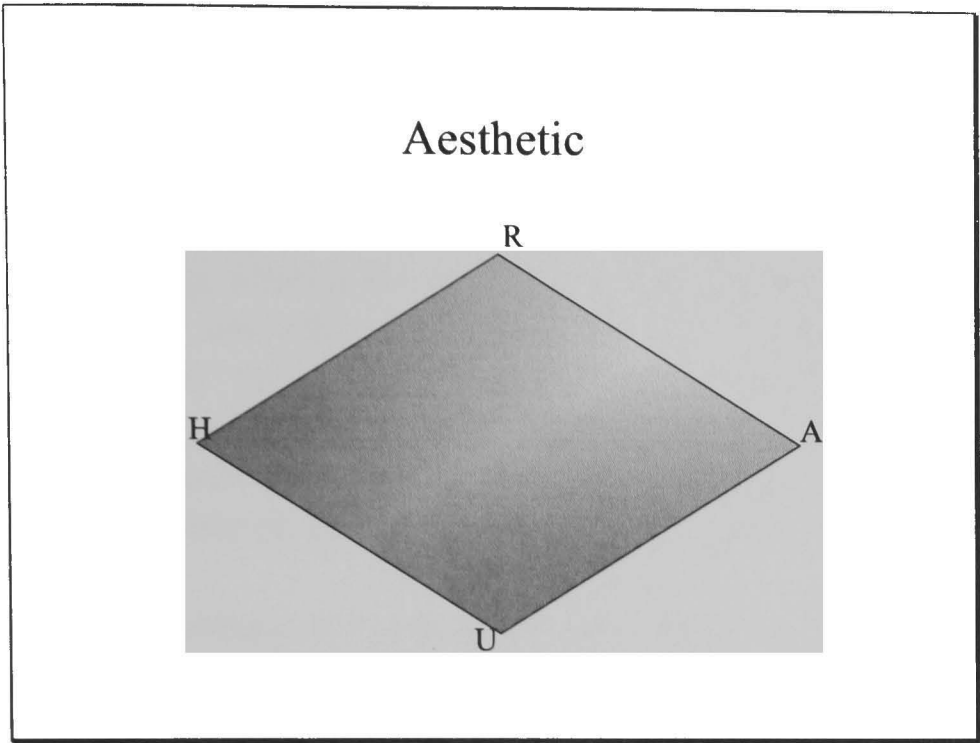


Figure 7. Aesthetic. The dark shade marks a philosophy where the sensual is regarded as part of the functional.

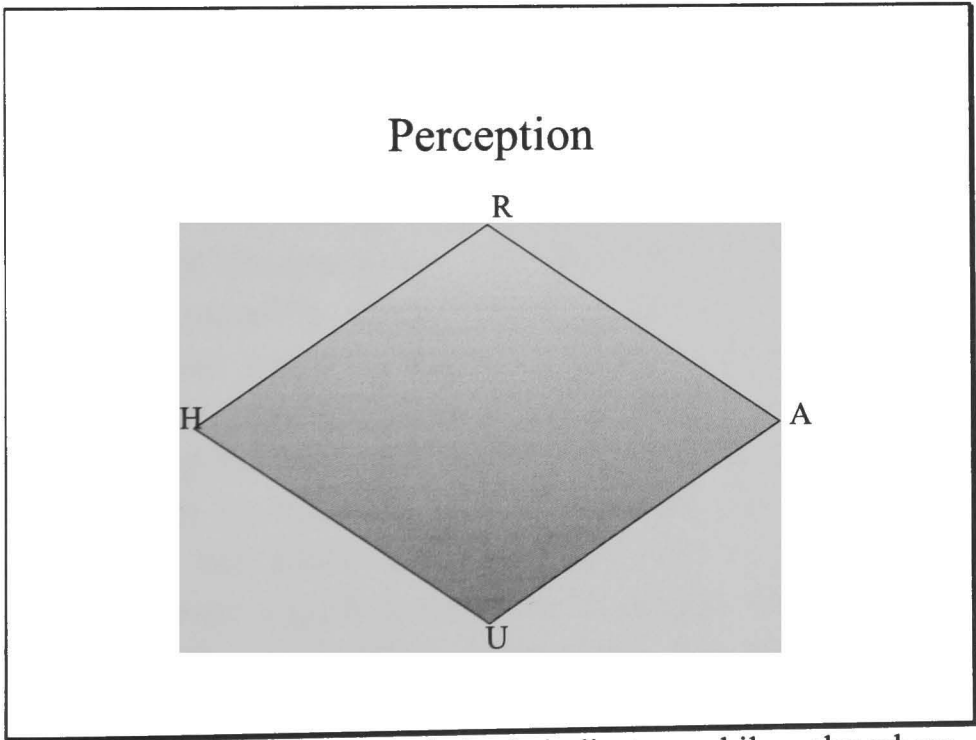


Figure 8. Perception. The dark shade indicates a philosophy where first perception not only generates an idea but suggests a goal.

*Rationalistic thoughts.* The main focus for the rationalists was to design objects, which were suitable for industrial production in a way that also made them affordable. Function was more important than form, which was regarded as being a result of the former. Functioning objects were also aesthetically pleasing, which simply put, meant that the aesthetic function was regarded as resulting from the physical function. When looking back in time, the rationalists saw very few artefacts, which had these characteristics: even when industrialism expanded in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the new techniques were generally applied to imitate craft rather than seeking alternative expressions or creating new platforms. It was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, that designers realised that industrial manufacturing did not allow the same expressions as craft with comparable quality. Blocking all other visions than those directed forward and to *the new* appeared to be the evident choice for the rationalists. This view is contrary to the conceptual statement on *time: ancient, modern and new signify relevance rather*

*than time.* Rationalism is sometimes suggested as one founding parameter for timelessness [now affective sustainability], but, in fact, incorporates an obstacle to it. As discussed at length in chapter III of this work, the singular view of time held by the rationalists: *the new time*, still contributes to artefacts becoming obsolete much faster than their technical and physical state suggests. The link between the desire for *the new* and the production of waste was discussed in chapter III, section 3:1 with reference to Birkeland (2002) and Hill (2002). This rationalist stand has contrary to intentions, worked well within a capitalist economic system, where consumerism is one corner stone.

*Design thinking.* Grouping Wagenfeldt, van der Rohe, Breuer, Le Corbusier, Perriand, Gropius, Brandt and Rietveld tightly together within the frame due to their common belief in *breaking with traditions* might be tempting, but it does not seem adequate (Pevsner, 1936).

A more detailed study makes it apparent that they differed in their application of the *industrial aesthetic*, which defines their positions in the rhomboid (fig. 3). They recognised the same ideology but practised it in their own way: some of their designs show distinct signs of other influences, humanistic as well as artistic, possibly even beyond their consciousness at the time. With growing experience some of them, famously Perriand but also Le Corbusier<sup>85</sup>, admitted the limitations of pure rationalism. Perriand began, in the 1930s, to understand the gap between the industrial aesthetic, human needs and – not least – popular taste with its clear links to traditions and the vernacular, although she never abandoned her ideals on the social role of design (McLeod, 2003). This short review of some significant details in design history sheds light on the actual development of the respective careers of the rationalists and adds valuable knowledge to the understanding of affective sustainability and aesthetic value.

The basically sound view, voiced by Le Corbusier, that there ought to be a choice of standardised, omnipresent products of good quality within the reach of everybody, has backfired from a sustainability point of view. These products were meant to be mass fabricated and cheap: he called these standard objects ‘types’, adapted to human ‘type-functions’ and corresponding to type-needs (Marcus, p. 66, 2005). Furthermore, they should be easy disposable and replaceable.

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<sup>85</sup> His critics argued that these signs were visible already 1929 with Villa Savoye, see earlier chapter III on Tradition.

According to Marcus, Le Corbusier spoke about them as ‘docile servants’ and ruled out any attachment between the user and the object. This is contrary to the importance, which today is assigned to the product-user relationship in discussions concerning sustainable societies<sup>86</sup>.

Those among the designers studied who were committed to rationalism no one seemed initially to have been in any doubt concerning their pursuit. Rationalism allowed for ‘simple’, good quality objects, which therefore had a democratic and social aim, argued Wagenfeld (Fiell, 1999). However, the idea of suggesting *the right objects for certain social groups* also backfired, not least in Scandinavia. The designers Kaj Frank and Aino Aalto (wife of Alvar) saw their ‘simple’ ceramics and glassware (still in production and found in upmarket shops) primarily aimed at the working class, being rejected by them but preferred by an international design conscious public (Marcus, 1998). The famous Swedish designer of glass, ceramics and metal, Signe Persson-Melin, realised early the limitations of the machine aesthetic. She has worked continuously with various crafts alongside industrial design and called early on for variation within industrial fabrication. When Sweden and Finland showed signs of returning to rationalistic ideals from the 1950s through the 1970s, she made it a point of honour to avoid the cold rational, standardised look, which she called *poor* (Wickman, 1997). Born 1925 and today over 80 years old, she can look back on a stream of successful designs for *the masses* and will in 2006 see her co-design of new crockery for Starbucks Coffee being introduced worldwide<sup>87</sup>.

Though progressive and aiming at setting standards for the future [which they did in many respects] the rationalists apparently had limited knowledge of how to attract and hold the eye of ordinary people. Their way of thinking, maybe unintentionally, turned elitist and had therefore a marginal effect on what we today call sustainability: people in general were not attracted by the rational objects, which made their durability merely a matter of theory. They preferred a style they already knew resulting in their adoption of inferior quality products (Marcus, 2005). New objects, without reference to those existing, seem therefore with hindsight to have hampered the aim of improving life for ordinary people. Simplicity, which evidently easily tended to look poor, did not for understandable reasons attract those people for whom poverty until recently had been a harsh reality. Many modernists judged simplicity as best illustrated by the vernacular:

‘the simplicity of the folk cultures is the sum of the achievements of centuries – universal – the heart of mankind’ (Le Corbusier, 1925).

There is no evidence that this view was a misjudgement, only that its practical implementation was misguided. Josef Hoffman, founder of Wiener Werkstätte and who merits a place between the *Rationalistic* and the *Artistic* in the rhomboid, argued that aesthetic simplicity, quality and workmanship would always be in opposition to the modernist view on function, aesthetic structure and economy. He thereby decided it was not worthwhile to follow a social agenda, ‘it will no longer be possible at all to convert the masses’, (Marcus, p. 39, 2005). Signe Persson-Melin, 55 years his junior, proved it was. This places her on the same axis as Hoffman but towards the *Humanistic* as opposed to his approach towards the *Artistic*.

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<sup>86</sup> See chapter III on *to waste and to sustain*.

<sup>87</sup> Probably due to the fact that she did not conform to the modernist ideals that have ruled much of her generation and dominated her professional milieu, she is not always included in encyclopaedias on Scandinavian and Swedish design and designers.

*Legacy.* Making *the new time* a predominant point of reference for design had, as argued above, a negative effect on the social agenda embraced by most rationalists as had their *de-personalisation* of objects. Even so the legacy of the rationalists is important: The aesthetic value of an object is enhanced from a user point of view, if its function by design is made visually unambiguous, thus facilitating the *immediate perception*. But there is a limitation: If this characteristic is the result of extreme simplicity and devoid of decoration [what today often is called minimalism] the object risks becoming easily disposable, and with little affective value.

## 2:1:2. ARTISTIC – AESTHETIC AS BEAUTY

*Artistic thoughts.* The artistic vision is one of beauty defining the object. Beauty thus has a value in itself, separated from the object's other functions, which are more or less viewed as complements rather than parts of a whole. From a design point of view this means that the expression of the object is heavily emphasised. It could be phrased simply as *function follows form* but followers of the artistic vision would probably argue that this is an oversimplification. Retaining the expression as part of the original idea would allow even for reduced function.

As argued in chapter III, section 3:4 of this work, aesthetic and beauty are not one: aesthetic is un-reflected while beauty is reflected.

Does a design philosophy embracing a fusion of the two contain an obstacle to affective sustainability? Even though an object is regarded as more aesthetic if its function is immediately understandable when perceived, this does not warrant that the function of the object is good. Even if the user due to un-reflected acceptance of an object is now ready for a renewed encounter on the reflective level (Norman, 2004)<sup>88</sup>, this might be the last encounter if the object does not function. Beauty is according to, among others, Armstrong (2004) 'a holistic feature'. Gentle curves and harmonious proportions are important, but adaptation to function is a likely further precondition for beauty. If a designer regards *aesthetic and beauty as one*, functionality may thus suffer in the end as a kind of final fulfilment.

In conclusion: Just as function laid bare by extreme minimalism is not a precondition for affective sustainability, neither is an effort to convey beauty by immediate perception. According to the conceptual statement, *the difference between aesthetic and beauty is one of respectively immediate and mediated sensual experience*.

*Design thinking.* Morris, and the other followers of the Arts and Crafts movement including Carl and Karin Larsson in Sweden, stressed that everyday objects should be *useful and beautiful*. What might have created problems for this movement was not a disregard for the importance of use but rather confusion about how use is best enhanced. Simplification in the sense of allowing nature to be manipulated into geometric patterns, and not the absence of ornaments, was regarded as modern design in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Marcus, 2005). Attention to detail for the likes of Morris was a precondition for beauty and this attention could only in those days be achieved by craft and not by industrial production. Not only the choice of material and the methods of manufacture consequently contribute to

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<sup>88</sup> According to Norman, design is understood on three levels; visceral, behavioural and reflective. The characteristics of these levels are explained in chapter III, section 3:5. His arguments, as well as supporting or diverging views, are thoroughly analysed in section 3 of this chapter.

a high price but also the limited volumes in which these products were fabricated. Therefore only expensive products had, in reality, a chance to be placed in the beauty category (Sparke, 1998). Views of this kind do not promote affective sustainability in design and appear, moreover, not to have been overruled by time.

Through years of celebration of modernism and the development of techniques for high quality industrial manufacturing, the way of thinking within the *Artistic* school has prevailed and nurtures obstacles for affectively sustainable design. For several designers, the balance between the aesthetic function and user function is not negotiable and sometimes creates confusion concerning their interdependence and not least concerning what can be achieved on the level of *immediate perception*.

Ingegerd Råman, one of Sweden's most celebrated glass designers, says that she 'listens to the material and her own needs' (Helgeson & Nyberg, p. 204, 2002). She regards herself as a functionalist and says that even the smallest detail might facilitate or impede function. According to critics some of her objects are nevertheless not fit for their intended use. They are too fragile to be a flowerpot or a vase, too difficult to clean to hold oil or vinegar. Neither have her re-workings of different drinking glasses seen real improvements from a user point of view, while the aesthetic is emphasised through the choice and treatment, including decorative features, of the material. They are fantastic to look at and even to hold, but very delicate. Many designers' recognised mission to achieve a *perfect function* as possible appears for the artist designer to pass beyond function and result in a pursuit for *aesthetic perfection* resulting in the object becoming more appropriate as art than a usable item. Arne Jacobsen is known to have advocated for *aesthetic function* instead. For him this appears to have meant a kind of perfection and he is known never to have regarded *better as good enough* but struggled to bring user function up to the same level as the aesthetic function. The results, also when it comes to affective sustainability, are design history.<sup>89</sup>

**Legacy.** Designers within the *Artistic* school have through their way of thinking created a criterion for the separation of designed art objects from designed objects: the former address function through aesthetic perfection, while the latter aims at a merger of the aesthetic and the functional. There are no clear indications that aesthetic perfection as such has affective value. Furthermore these designers appear to have a very flexible relationship with *time* and are making use of *traditions* independently.

### 2:1:3. UNRESTRAINED – RESTLESS PERCEPTION

**Unrestrained thoughts.** Being unrestrained is of course to see no boundaries, neither in expression nor in technology. As was argued above, designers appear constantly to be trying to liberate or look critically at the design direction, which was dominant when they entered the profession. Being free is part of being unrestrained: to shake off what are regarded as *truths*, sometimes for the sake of it. The usefulness of this *liberating* exercise is proven by some of the anti-modernists and post-modernists who explored various design directions to rediscover what had been doomed to oblivion [by the modernists].

If *direct perception* of a design solution is a first important guide to affective sustainability, restless perception diverts focus and suggests several possible solutions rather than one – this is putting it very simply from a cognition

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<sup>89</sup> There are some very well known exceptions though, not least his cutlery, which are regarded by many critics as difficult to grip and hold.



theory point of view. This obstacle has though two dimensions of which one may turn into a possibility: The designer avoids getting trapped by his/hers own rules. It is said about rationalists generally that they became dependent on their own design process where everything had to be done in a very precise way and come out exactly as planned – or not at all!<sup>90</sup>

*Design thinking.* Magistretti, Castiglioni and Starck belong to those, who have not been guided by preconceptions, which merit them a place in the *Unrestrained* category. These three designers are primarily linked together by their *absence of a personal aesthetic*. Some may protest concerning Starck, but there are, in fact, very few recurring visual elements also in his production. Secondly, they all have an interest in human behaviour outside that which immediately concerns designing. Even if Starck is the only one who is known to have formulated it, these designers all seem aware of the importance of the object telling a story, because of which it is not as easily replaceable or viewed as irrelevant. Furthermore, the presence of a *story* creates *immediate reaction* as it touches inner chords (Morgan, 1999).

A critical look may well result in *the truth still being regarded as a truth*: there is no strain in either keeping or disregarding a design direction. Biographies of Panton and the Eames couple, who are placed close to the extreme of the *Unrestrained*, confirm this standpoint, which is further explored in section, 2:1:4. However, Jacobsen and Mathsson merit being placed away from the extreme in the direction of the *Artistic* and the *Humanistic* respectively. Many designers have kept this critical or questioning stance throughout their career, which has seen them move away from the ideology they initially held, owing to experience paired with insight about changing conditions in society. Quite a few have seen reason to cut the ties, some more effectively than others, and have pursued their own route, trying out different expressions and moving freely between ideologies. Ron Arad is a good example of this and claims that his generation (he was born in 1951) has nothing to react and consequently have great freedom. When it comes to design, he admits to not being completely open-minded though. For example, whenever he thinks about a car, the image of the Citroën DS comes up in front of his eyes (Collings, 2004).

For the *unrestrained*, neither sources of inspiration nor aims appear to be restricted to what is, or will be, *new* but recognise no boundaries either in time or culture. Materials are, without doubt, there to be tempered by the designer and not to direct him or her. From a design history point of view, the designers in the *Unrestrained* category are not homogenous. Following the classification in Sparke (1998)), they are with one exception to be found in all groups; 'Turn of the Century', 'Modernism with regard to Traditions', 'Modernism after the War', 'Movements and Counter Movements', 'Towards a new Millennium'. The one exception is 'Modernism with new Technology', where the majority from the *Rationalist* category are to be found, on the other hand.

Restless perception enables the designer to avoid a *single vision* approach, as noted earlier. However, one obstacle to affective sustainability emerges when looking carefully at the work done by some of the designers who are placed in this part of the rhomboid frame. In general, designers have better and worse ideas and have made many designs, which never reached even the final drawing phase. They

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<sup>90</sup> Mies van der Rohe had very few of his architectural projects realised due to his very formalistic or 'single vision' approach (Prologue)

have neither come close to be manufactured, although some have been realised as prototypes. This must be judged as normal. Specific to the *unrestrained* designers is that some of their designs, even famous ones, take us on *un-expected journeys*: the designers appear to be carried away by eclecticism and/or the design seem to be a ‘one of a kind’ and the idea behind is never really pursued in other designs, which have followed. A few of these objects tend to live on as collectibles if the designer is famous enough. In that respect they are not affectively sustainable and would never have had a long life, if the designer was not so important.

This reasoning needs to be moderated in what concerns one crucial detail though: some of these designs have taken a place among the *icons*<sup>91</sup>. Even if the original designer never him/herself pursued the design idea, this was done later by someone else. Gerrit Rietveld is one example of this. He pursued his principles concerning construction, based on the geometrical base of the object, in architecture as in design. The designs are in that respect not ‘one of a kind’ but could today be understood as a constant search to facilitate not only production but also human understanding of function and the ability to orient in space and not only be ‘better understood and experienced as abstract form’ (Raizman, 2003, p. 169)<sup>92</sup>. From a design history perspective, his legacy, or even that of De Stijl is less about function and more about construction.<sup>93</sup>

Nevertheless, Rietveld claimed late in his career that he had never overlooked function, but kept these thoughts to himself. With reference to current interest in neuroscience and cognitive theory<sup>94</sup> and its importance for design and designers, the coherence becomes quite clear: Rietveld [and De Stijl] aimed at simplification rather than simplicity, even if their efforts never really went beyond the abstract. Rietveld’s ideas took different turns when aiming at facilitating production: the primary colours in the ‘Chair in Red and Blue’ from 1918, each signalling a specific part of the chair, are the most famous. Sparke (1998) analysis the choice of these colours [and the exposed joints] differently: ‘introduced a new level of self-consciousness in designing chairs’ (p. 99) Later works, like the also famous ‘Zig-Zag’ chair from 1934, are recognised as pointing in the direction of cantilever chairs, also those moulded in plastic, which started to appear in the 1960s. To no surprise, as De Stijl worked on ‘neo-plastic’ ideas and tried to achieve balanced, asymmetrical compositions, which would work in various applications, with their designs (Raizman, 2003).

The resemblance between Panton’s stacking chair from 1960/67 and the Zig-Zag is quite striking. Just like the Zig-Zag, the ‘Crate’ chair from 1935 became a ‘one of its kind’, but the idea has lived on. Crate was originally sold as DIY and the rough surface was new for Rietveld (fig. 9). The chair seems like a true forerunner to contemporary garden furniture not only visually but also when it comes to its manufacture and assemblage. Furthermore, this chair has an immediate visual likeness to Breuer’s well-known tubular steel chair (model B3 or Wassily), which had already been designed in 1925. Rietveld is known to have

<sup>91</sup> According to Reyner Kras in “Icons of design” (2000) an icon provides more than just an exterior view of itself. Even when it comes to an object for everyday life, an icon is “*an image of an idea that leads an intangible existence at a higher level of abstraction*”.

<sup>92</sup> As manifested in the Schröder house from 1924 (Sparke, 1998, Raizman, 2003).

<sup>93</sup> The legacy is about an aim to create a pure form of expression, binding together art, applied art architecture. They should together create a holistic context (Sparke, 1998, Padovan, 2002, Raizman, 2003)

<sup>94</sup> See further chapter III, section 3:5 and section 3 of this chapter.

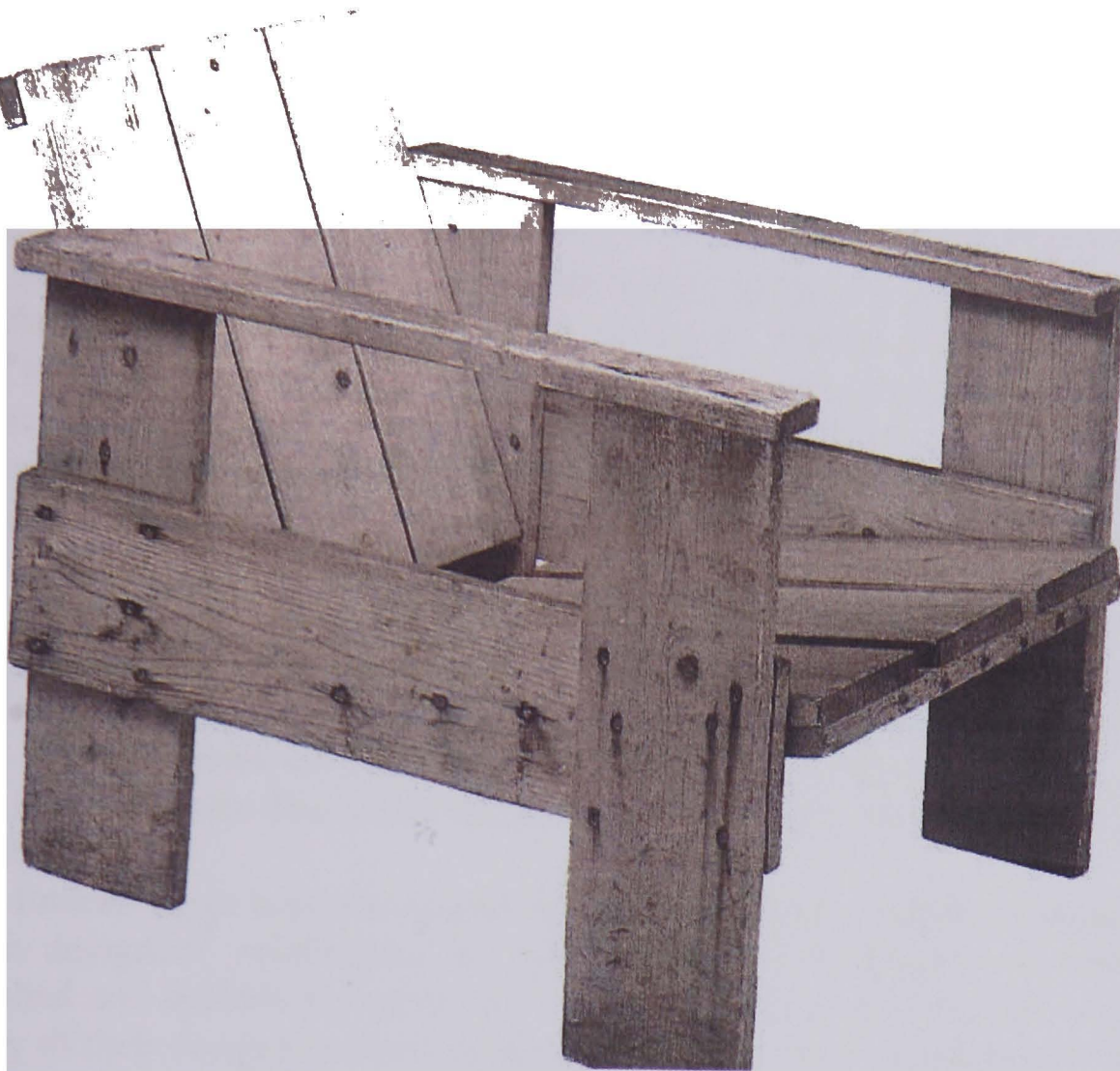


Figure 9. The 'CRATE' armchair designed by Rietveld 1935 and manufactured by Metz & Co.

influenced Breuer, who continued to pursue these ideas. Rietveld designed a bent plywood chair almost 20 years before Charles Eames and 10 years before Aalto and Breuer. Several of these three designers' chairs are still in production with Vitra, Artek and Isokon Plus. Rietveld's place close to the *Unrestrained*, despite his adherence to rationalism, is an example of how criteria other than designer thinking have been used in most established classifications.

**Legacy.** There are reasons to believe that restless perception is an unconscious search – an inner urge - for simplification starting with an interest in human needs.

#### 2:1:4. UNRESTRAINED - TRADITIONS KEPT AT DISTANCE

**More unrestrained thoughts.** Several of the designers classified as unrestrained, have freed themselves from *traditions* in one sense: They treat them with a certain amount of disrespect, which is not the same as disclaiming them or dissociating themselves. The result is at times judged as eclecticism, the mixing of styles. Interpreting Arad (Collings, 2004), it is more accurate to label this design direction *a mix of expressions* with the aim to make the object very visible. Arad says he wants to ditch the heavy burden of the past and free him from frames of reference but at the same time he wants to be able to refer to cultural movements – if only he can sweep them away once finished. (Guidot & Boissiere, 1999) His argument bears much resemblance to Panton's. (Sparke, 1998)

Jacobsen's design can hardly be called eclectic. But he was the first to combine an organic approach with all the rationalism of mass-production without waving the aesthetic and the personal and without being criticised, like Loewy, for



dressing his objects to give them mass-appeal (Marcus 2005). Panton, working for Jacobsen in the 1950s, choose a form of exile [he lived in Switzerland from the early 1960s] to be able to free him from the modernist heritage, which was at the time very strong in Scandinavia and still is. There are nevertheless several references in his designs, which can be traced back to what is commonly named Danish Modern.

**Design thinking.** Though they immediately appear to be very different, not least when looking at their designs, the designers mentioned above and placed among the *Unrestrained*, share the same attitude concerning achievement: stay with your ideas and approach realisation with the attitude that *all is possible*. They all thus succeeded where other designers had failed or judged realisation as impossible, at least at the time (Polster, 1999). Bohlin, also in the same section of the frame, explains: 'I go with my extreme ideas and make them reality' (Helgeson & Nyberg, p.71, 2002). Also Arad is extremely idea-driven and his voiced opinion that 'it is not the actual shape, which is strong but the idea of the shape' (Collings, p. 86 ,2004). must be regarded as something of an eye-opener and an ideal he shares with the famous architect Oscar Niermayer (Segre, 2000). Sudjic (1989) argues that Arad became successful first when he abandoned all constraints.

Interesting to note and important for the concept of affective sustainability is these designers' relationship to *time* in their work. They were and are all established and sufficiently grounded in *now time* to understand the commercial viability of their designs [even if some of them had to take production in their own hands] but their adherence to *new-time* appears to be on the level of new possibilities and not on newness as such. Behrens and Dresser, contemporaries and both named to be the first true industrial designer, are very special in this respect. Behrens was an early patron of Le Corbusier, van der Rohe and Gropius. Both Behrens and Dresser had a very functionalist approach in their design but managed even though balancing this with a very potent link to past experiences, not least concerning the role of decoration and appearance to make the object more accessible. Behrens famously stated, 'a motor ought to look like a birthday present' (Sparke, 1998, p. 32). Dresser's quote is not less remarkable if not as known:

'We must not be copyist, or merely servile imitators; on the contrary, from the fullness of our knowledge we must seek to produce what is new, and was is accordant with the spirit of the times in which we live; but what we do produce must reveal our knowledge of the ornament of past ages.' (Whiteway, 2004, p. 93).

Dresser's stance on *being modern* becomes quite clear when this statement is carefully interpreted: modern items are not designed with immediate commercialisation in mind and therefore retain in their ornamentation a purpose which goes beyond what sells easily and contain information on what is pleasing in a longer term perspective than to the point of sale. For Dresser it was hence a necessity to study arts from the east dating from periods before European influence. Western commerce had, according to Dresser, had a devastating effect on applied art in Europe, an effect, which eventually spread to Asia after the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. His appreciation of decorative principles did not result in a coherent design philosophy but probably afforded him a mixed reputation. This

appreciation sometimes resulted in forms which, even if not influenced by western commerce belonged to religious myths completely inaccessible to other cultures. On the other hand, his glass design (fig.10) from 1890 looks surprisingly contemporary more than 100 years later ((Whiteway, 2004). Placing Behrens and Dresser in the frame is an intricate task. Although a rationalist, Behrens was clearly influenced by expressionism. Dresser, 34 years his senior, was an early industrialist and rationalist but at the same time a curious reformist and one of the first to appreciate the qualities of Japanese applied art. They are therefore both positioned not too far from the *Unrestrained* sector.

As it happens, a majority of the designers close to the frame of the rhomboid seem to have been more engaged in practising design than theorising, while those occupying a mid-sector position appear also to have had an interest in educating, debating and questioning: society, culture, architecture and design. Bruno Mathsson, who for half a century was probably Sweden's most well-known furniture designer, was a proponent of modernism but did not take part in formulating its founding ideas. Neither did he, as far as is known, take an official critical stand on them. Instead he is known for the same curiosity and for being as restless and stubborn an innovator as Jacobsen. The exhibition "*Bruno Mathsson – Designer and Architect*" was partly reviewed with a critical undertone concerning the lack of ideology behind Mathsson's work (Andersson, 2006).

*Legacy.* Even so, there are reasons to believe that this *lack of ideology* works in favour of affective sustainability. Awareness made conscious by inner conviction and experience seems to promote the realisation of this concept more than ideologies. Aalto, Mathson, the Eames couple and Jacobsen have all had their designs in production continuously since they were first introduced in the thirties or, in the case of Jacobsen, the fifties (Revere McFadden, 1982).

*Traditions at a distance,* is more a way to name an attitude than to explain a way of thinking. The most accurate way to describe this attitude might be *emancipation*: not being under control [of traditions] as traditions are a source only. There are signs though, that certain designers are struggling with traditions: they do not appear to understand to what extent they are influenced or should be influenced.

*Aesthetics and even less beauty* do not come forward as a very prominent issues when analysing the unrestrained designers. Function is paramount even if none of them are known to subscribe to 'form follow function'. A qualified guess is that they regard the aesthetic as a function as such, which together with other functions decides whether the object is to become valuable or disposable.

Finally a famous quote from Rietveld: "The first step on the road to consciousness is awareness of existence as an individual, which starts with the separation of the self from the space around" (,Guidot & Boisserie p.37, 1999).

To be idea-driven rather than context-driven is a common feature among the most truly unrestrained, which emphasises the role of *direct perception* as one important guide when addressing affective sustainability the design process.

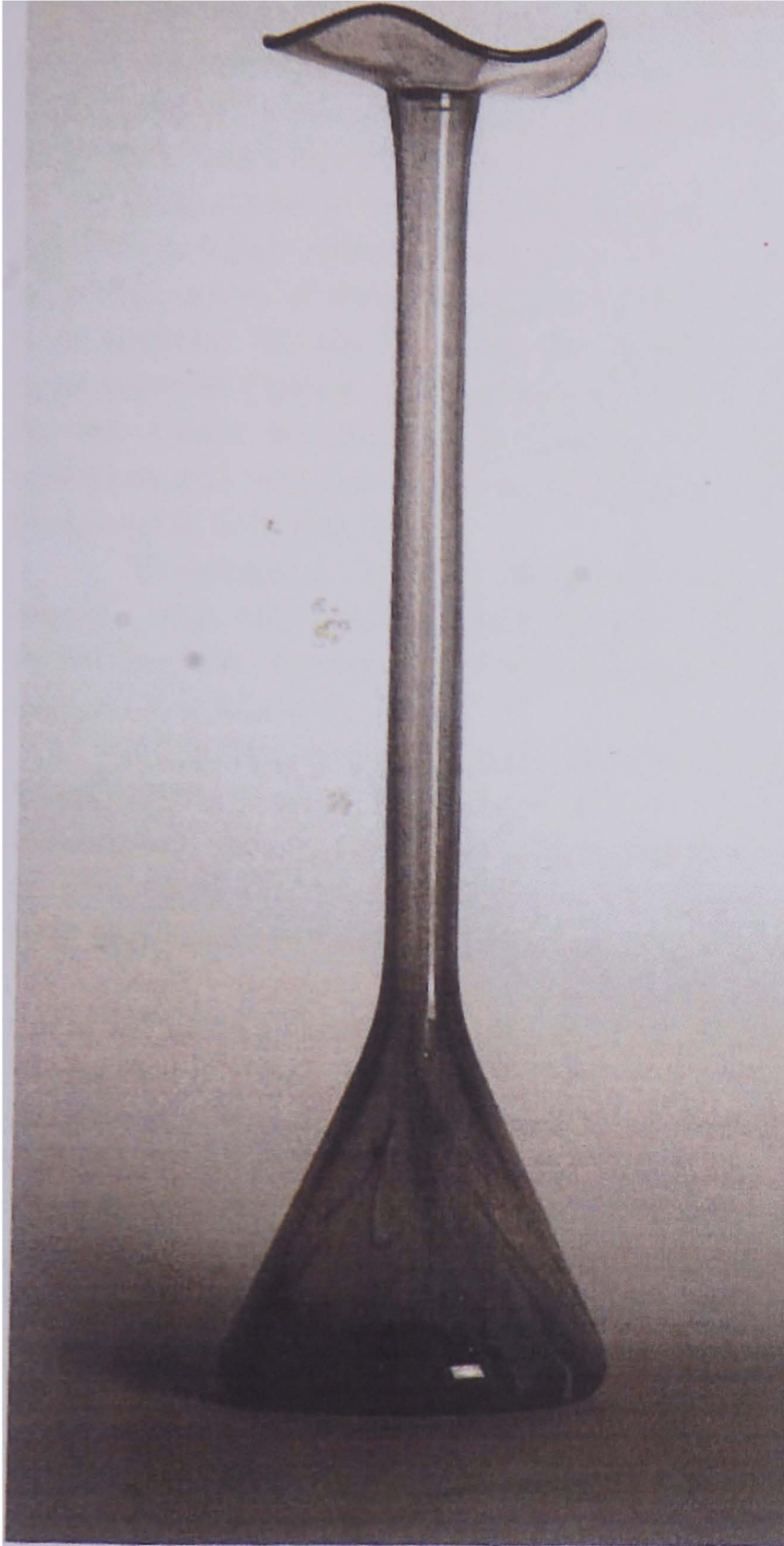


Figure 10. Long-necked glass vase, designed by Christopher Dresser 1890

#### 2:1:5. HUMANISTIC – TRADITIONS RULING

**Humanistic thoughts.** This school of thought is not to be equated with organic design but to a wider concept: the understanding of humans and human needs. This includes of course regard and respect for the human body but also another prominent element: respect for nature. It is important to enhance materials through the design of the object and also to be non-obstructive: concerning buildings and their surroundings, furniture and their context. What defines this school from the *Unrestrained* and the *Rationalistic* is how they relate to *traditions* and to craft. The interpretation of function separates it from the *Artistic*. Wegner, whose place in the frame reveals a true *Humanistic* view, was together with his contemporaries Juhl and Mogensen, the founder of what is today called *Danish Modern*: ‘... a

period when craftsmanship, traditional values and modern living could be seen to be working together in harmony.' (Sparke, 1998, p. 160).

The overall belief unifying the designers in the *Humanistic* section is the mutual dependence between explicit function and emotional value. The differences in ways of thinking are on the level of how they experience and understand basic human needs.

The obstacle to affective sustainability in *Humanistic* thought lies in *traditions [are] ruling*: traditions exert major influence on their thinking. However, most of these designers have tried to handle this, even if not always with success. Wegner's chairs are interesting examples: those, which are still manufactured [which have proven to be affectively sustainable], are his earliest. As his career proceeded, he became increasingly faithful to Danish design traditions and was less prone to experiment with alternative forms and materials. (Englund & Schmidt, 2003).

Henningsen, 20 years Wegner's senior, and designer of the famous PH-lamps<sup>95</sup>, also embraced traditional forms and materials but took up the challenge to rethink them for new uses, which included mass-production. His approach was more or less scientific.

Kjaerholm was much less of a forerunner than Henningsen. Egyptian and Greek works inspired him but also those by van der Rohe and Rietveld. One thing has become very apparent though: he did not passively build on any heritage, he re-conquered the areas which he intuitively experienced he could relate to (Harlang, Helmer-Petersen & Kjaerholm, 1999).

**Design thinking.** A certain kind of cosiness as an expression of human needs was embraced by Wegner but shunned by Kjaerholm, who saw *aesthetic calmness* as a precondition for human well-being and went for rather extreme, if refined, simplicity. Originals or copies (depending on resources) of designs by Wegner and his contemporaries are almost omnipresent in private homes even outside Scandinavia, while Kjaerholm is a favourite among architects and collectors (Englund & Schmidt, 2003). The proponents of organic design; Klint, Aalto and Mathsson did not hold tubular steel as a favoured material. Aalto, who already about 1935 became critical of rationalist principles, is credited with having said that wood is a humane material and often adequate to the needs and expectations of the user. This *honest use of material* is also one of the main design principles for Wright, often regarded as the pioneer of organic design (Brooks Pfeiffer, 1993).

To be correctly understood these often heard statements might need clarification. User expectations about the appropriateness of material are most of the time not based on professional knowledge but on making sense of *immediate perception*. Through their way of expressing themselves, Aalto and Wright show understanding of how user priorities are formed. Organic design is the inspiration for ergonomics, a later and more scientific way of making objects fit for human use (Reed, 1998). Ergonomics concern primarily methods, which adjust objects to human ways of working and will therefore not necessarily improve affective sustainability, although being an important addition to design. Organic design has a wider focus, which, by definition embraces human ways of being.

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<sup>95</sup> The first prototype was introduced 1925 at the Paris Exposition. Dahlbeck-Lutteman wrote, in conjunction with the Cooper-Hewitt Museum exhibition, Scandinavian Modern 1880-1980, "*On a small scale, this seminal design may even be compared with Le Corbusier's Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau*" (Revere McFadden, 1982)



Morrison and Wright give additional nuance to the thoughts of the *Humanistic* school. Concerning regard for nature and non-obstructive design, Morrison is calling for a regaining of 'space sensitivity' and the creation of an atmosphere, instead of popular talk on trying to achieve 'naturalness, simplicity and innocence' (Boyer & Zanco, 1999, p. 62-63). Wright argues for a revitalisation of "*anew*" to the cost of the omnipresent *new*.

*Legacy.* The rhomboid frame (fig. 3) displays a certain cluster in the sector holding the *Humanistic* school of thought. Are humanistic convictions or ideas thus the most important parameters defining affective sustainability? What is suggested should at this stage still be regarded as directional. As noted above, several of the designers studied have made quests through a variety of schools of thought. They therefore carry with them a multifaceted way of thinking even if with a more or less precise direction.

*The aesthetic* is in humanistic thought the result of regard for human needs, physical or mental, which includes spatial organisation. Ideas are significant but appear to be readily overruled by reason and turned into concepts, which are then followed through according to plan. The designs adhering to the *Humanistic* school carry signs of this early conceptualisation: original ideas have been adjusted to certain principles. The influence of *direct perception* and *intuition* is thus not defining how the idea is developed. Knowledge is allowed to interfere, which might be an effort to avoid being *ruled by traditions*. Following the arguments in section 3:5 of chapter III, knowledge is a positive addition to intuitive thought mostly when experience is lacking. Otherwise the effect might be negative: unconscious but valuable experience might not be allowed to contribute.

## 2:1:6. PRAGMATISM – COMPROMISE ABOUT IDEAS

*Thoughts in the middle.* There are many interesting observations to be made when studying encyclopaedias for information on designers and their work, even if the different editors and their collaborators do not differ too much on whose work is or will be timeless.<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, when it comes to the reasons why, these are often expressed in widely different terms and there is a more or less constant confusion between timeless in the sense of *ever in demand* and being an *icon* and *ever remembered*. This issue is further addressed in the conclusion of this section. Focus here is on another observation: when selections are narrowed down to countries or regions, they naturally encompass designers who are little known outside their country or region but have had great success at home. These have often worked in fields like glass, ceramics and metal. The home market for some of these products are normally big enough to keep a number of companies going and likewise support several designers, which is seldom the case with furniture and certainly not cars. This is not to say that all designers who have been much engaged in these fields have only gained domestic fame.

Examples of the opposite are many and well known: Arne Jacobsen, Tapio Wirkkala, not forgetting Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Peter Behrens. The striking difference between those just mentioned and some of the only domestically famous are that the latter often enjoyed parallel careers in industrial design and in the crafts. Many of their contributions to industry are still manufactured and in

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<sup>96</sup> As mentioned in the chapter II, Methodology and Methods, designs less than 50 years of age should not merit a place among the affectively sustainable. However, when there has been overall consensus among the referenced sources on a designer's contribution to timelessness, this designer has been included in the selection.

demand and some designers have also lived to see their heritage being carried on by a younger generation designers. The Swedish designer Signe Persson-Melin is one of them. As mentioned earlier in this section, she has managed to create items, which have appealed to the connoisseurs as well as the masses and found her way into art museums and design museums alike. There is also a substantial biography written about her (Wickman, 1997). At the age of 80 she is still in demand as a designer. She is the one designer in the frame, who holds the most centre position and moreover, she is still among us. She is therefore the only designer of those selected and analysed, who has been interviewed.

*Design thinking.* The interview took place in the beginning of March 2006. It focused on *the four schools of thought* and the conceptual categories and statements in a rather discursive way:

*You are holding a position with a certain adherence to all the described philosophies or schools of thought. Are you a compromiser, someone who is always prone to negotiate your ideas?*

As a mother of three, Signe Persson-Melin recalls, she never really aspired to have an international career and go abroad. After having worked only with crafted ceramics, she realised in the 1960s that the time had come to join the industry and she managed also to enter a new discipline, glass. It became clear from the outset that she had to be able to explain the ideas behind her work to the clients. Instead of the attitude, 'they ought to see for themselves'; she put time and effort in mutual understanding. This strategy has proved to be successful up to this day and has earned her a reputation of being easy to work with. However, she claims that this type of pragmatism never interfered with her ambitions: neither those concerning aesthetic nor function. Compromises must be mutual and motivated by facts. Keeping costs down ought to be the last criterion to consider. It is normally quite late in the design process that it becomes evident how the idea can be realised in a cost effective way.

*On time:*

'I think in terms of Now, not New. I feel very free to search my own and other's archives and look for detailing rather than designs. The resulting design might look very new but not for the sake of it but because I have developed it after my understanding of changing human needs and what I think technology allows.'

*On traditions:*

'These are very important to me. You must study your own roots and what has already been done, while being curious on what is going on now.'

*On aesthetics:*

'Things must feel right. I keep on until they do. I have never compromised on this. Rather I have re-designed the object totally to feel right and still fit into manufacturing. It has never been tempting to drive simplicity too far, neither in the 1950s when modernism was all around nor as a protest against the very robust, which was popular in the 1980s.'

*On the aesthetic and function:*

'This is complicated. Things must work, be usable. I do not think people in the industry always understand that usability and function is not one and the same. The latter is just as much about how people experience an object, not only if they regard it as ugly or beautiful but why and which associations it unconsciously awakes. A minor change of colour or texture in the glazing may have almost disastrous results for how the object is perceived by the user. I mean, if you experience an object as warm and caring you care for it naturally, do you not do

that? That is probably what you mean by affectively sustainable. This is just about my only problem with industry: They don't realise that they can't change details in the design of an object without risking turning the object into something much less appreciated. Dimensions and proportions are there not only for usability, but also for the overall function, which includes all senses. Is this what you call humanistic?'

*On being artistic versus rationalistic:*

'This has never been a major problem for me. I can be a sculptress one day and a designer the other. The difference is evident and regards what I owe my clients and the intended users of my objects. When I am a sculptress, I don't owe anyone anything, if no one wants to buy my works, they do not have to. Craft and art will always be on the artist's terms. As a designer you have a responsibility towards a lot of people. A very important point is that I am experimenting just as much when designing as when crafting. There are always new areas to be conquered and it is important not to let rationalism hamper your ideas or restrict what in fact is possible.'

*On being unrestrained:*

No I have never been like that. You can see from what I have designed that there is some kind of feeling of "belonging to the same family". On the other hand I have never abstained from trying out new materials even if it meant a total change of technique. The importance of the first idea coming up in my head? It is often *the* idea!

## 2:2 Summary

Designers are more or less consistently categorised with reference to the time when they were most active and also to their commitments rather than to their thinking as manifested by designs. These commitments could be called a formal design philosophy while their thinking is more of an applied philosophy. This seems not to be a rule, although these two often merge. Whether formal or applied, the philosophy holds obstacles as well as possibilities to affective sustainability. In concluding the selection process and the subsequent analysis of *the four schools of thought*, the term *timeless* is exceptionally employed again as it is the denomination used by designers and their biographers alike.

- Designers explicitly fascinated by the new rarely have *timeless* objects ascribed to them. They did consequently not make it to the shortlist of 29. According to the references used to identify and select these designers, neither a regard to *time* nor to the conception as such appears to be of great concern or define their work.
- *Aesthetics* and beauty are, on the contrary, of major concern. The analysis gives reason to believe, that many of the designers realise that an object is not perceived as aesthetically pleasing if its function – not usability - is not immediately evident and conforming to what is expected [of this type of object]. Some designers go on and confirm: what is perceived is not beauty but part of the aesthetic, while others call this beauty. A majority seem aware that function has to be confirmed in usability otherwise the object will not last. On the other hand, they express belief in the aesthetic being able to override smaller defects on the level of usability rather than the reverse. Those who believe in beauty by perception argue differently and

have also a tendency to create objects, which may well be remembered, but more as icons or art.

- The stances with regard to *traditions* are very complicated. Most of these designers appear to be aware that traditions are valued experiences and not rules but are still afraid traditions might obstruct and restrict their thinking and creativity. This results in different strategies, disrespect, *emancipation* and escape. The famous strategy of detraditionalisation proclaimed by the modernist movement seems, however, not very viable among those designers living today. Furthermore, most of the designers studied do not seem to be aware that traditions are part of our unconscious experiences and influential also beyond reason. They appear to assume that traditions can be controlled or eliminated by reflection. The proposition that the abandoning of all references to traditions in a design enhances, or even results in, *timelessness* does not gain any support in the analysis. Several of the designers have, on the contrary, apparently realised: users have difficulties relating to objects, which are not familiar in any way. Designs by the more explicit rationalist, which were accomplished before they started to gain this awareness, are consequently those, which have lived on more as icons or as the choice of connoisseurs. Where traditions have more strongly influenced the designers, their works seem to balance between being *timeless* and *anonymous*. Even if users ought easily to recognise and understand these designs, there is apparently a fine line not to transcend: the object must have an identity. This may be lacking either due to extreme simplicity; void of characteristics or that it already exists in abundance. Among the designers, some seem to have realised this and decided to liberate themselves by working with materials less bound to traditions or by changing between materials. According to the analysis, few designers manage to have a relation to traditions only on the level of experience.
- How *Perception* influences designing has to be analysed from a user as well as a designer perspective. Is there evidence that designers do judge, the first and immediate idea, which arrives without much reflection, as of major importance for the continued design process? Do they, furthermore, consider if this idea implies a design solution, which will also probably be immediately understood by the user? Most of those designers, who have seen a number of their designs become *timeless*, have also been true to their ideas and of course more so as they have experienced success. There are also several examples of them returning to the initial idea when first having taken a new course after a discussion with a client, although very few of them express absolute confidence in their doing or are able to give a rationale for it. As a probable consequence, there are various examples of them seeking support for their *inner conviction or intuition*: by looking into history, by observing and being curious and by exploring their own roots and needs rather than their lifestyle and often also by emphasising the aesthetic. Finally, there are indications that some designers have recognised a relationship between aesthetics and simplification.

### 3. Concretising affective sustainability: a fictional online exhibition

In an effort to concretise this new concept a number of MA-students were asked to be curators of a fictional exhibition on *the theme of affective sustainability*. The theme was intentionally described without direct reference to the phenomenon of timelessness or any other well-established concept of adjacent meaning, although it was introduced as the subject for the investigation. The lack of well-known references was expected to make it difficult for the participants to seek advice and direction from peers, literature and the like, which was judged as important from a methodological point of view.

With reference to chapter II, Methodology and Methods, this application provided data of type dB: *the process in the mind of the beholder in which an object becomes affectively sustainable*.

As curators the participants had *two key tasks* and two related options<sup>97</sup>

1. **Selecting any five (5) objects representing the theme.**  
Option: *Commenting on the selected objects.*
  2. **Choosing one of four texts to introduce the exhibition.**  
Option: *Completing with own text for this introduction.*
- Each key task had a *designated research aim*:

1. (a) To suggest the type of experience guiding the selections: high response rate would indicate a swift selection process based on learned experience. Low response rate would indicate a demanding selection process trying to access lived experience. (b) To provide a basis for continued analysis of notions vital to the concept.
2. (a) Indicating the relevance of the conceptual content of affective sustainability. (b) Learning about the match between objects selected to illustrate and text chosen to describe the concept.

The investigation was carried out between October and December 2005 with tests [complete tests of how this type of investigation worked] taking place in May and September. The workshop as it appeared on the website is on view in appendix A. Details concerning a combined exhibition and advertising campaign derived from an interview with the curators Jan Norman and Micael Ernstell at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Stockholm have contributed to the understanding of the results from the investigation (2006).<sup>98</sup>

Approximately 120 students<sup>99</sup> were invited to participate. They were furthermore encouraged by their course-director to do fulfil their task as curators.

<sup>97</sup> See also Appendix D, documenting the website or <[www.borjesson-mk.se](http://www.borjesson-mk.se)> Log in: FOREVER

<sup>98</sup> Instead of arranging a special exhibition in the actual museum to celebrate the official 'The Year of Design, 2005', the direction of the museum decided to *exhibit* in leading newspapers by doing a series of full page adverts, featuring seminal objects including those which generally is less associated with design: for example protective wear and heavier tools. Browsing the archives to select the objects resulted in seemingly endless discussions. Finally the curators decided with the advertising specialist to proceed differently, in principal: the archives were browsed individually and the objects, which could be easily recollected afterwards, were chosen. The *exhibition* was a success.

<sup>99</sup> Course leaders mentioned different numbers as the investigation went on due to changes within their groups.

*The main group* comprised 40 students coming from three (3) smaller and specialised<sup>100</sup> courses in different universities in the UK, Scotland and Sweden. These students had more frequent personal contact with their course director and the majority agreed and expressed motivation to take on the task, according to him.

*The observation group* numbered 80 students and was composed of four (4) smaller groups: two in each of year 1 and 2 respectively. They were all part of the same general MA-course where specialisation is supposed to evolve over the years<sup>101</sup>. Each smaller group had a designated course leader, who was not engaged in promoting the workshop, which was done by the overall MA-course director. The students in the observation group might for this reason have felt less involved than the students in the main group. This was considered from the outset.

33 visits to the site resulted in 8 submissions and 3 partly completed exercises.

*A follow-up questionnaire* concerning *reason not to respond* was sent to all the participants by e-mail. It asked those who had already responded to disregard the questionnaire and was answered by 11 respondents, of which 8 came from the observation group. One of these had general problems grasping the task, while the remaining 7 stated that the process of choosing objects for the exhibition had taken much more time and demanded much more real engagement than they had envisaged. This corresponds to answer number 1 in the follow up questionnaire, appendix B. They frequently also reinforced this answer with their own comments. The remaining 3 respondents stated that it was difficult to choose these objects intellectually: they would have preferred to choose from exposed images. This corresponds to answer number 2 in appendix B.

*The two tests* involved a group of 20 MA-students in industrial design and 8 practising designers. At the stage when the MA-group was engaged, the site was less refined and more demanding in terms of number of objects for inclusion in the selection. The students were, on the other hand, introduced to the survey through personal contact and had the opportunity to pose questions. They reported that it was taking a much longer time than they imagined when first presented with the task and only four (4) fully completed their task as curators.<sup>102</sup>

The same tendency persisted during *the next test* [September]. Though all declared great interest in the task, only five (5) submitted their results in the end, all saying that the process of choosing the five objects easily consumed two to three hours! Those not submitting conveyed the issue of 'hours disappearing' when engaging in the tasks, as the only reason for not keeping their promise. For this second test, maximum information was drawn from the first and several changes were as a result made to the design of the site and also the written brief. Moreover, the test group had a different general background; they were all practising designers. This was planned explicitly to learn if a practising designer would interact differently with the tasks than a design student and based on the

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<sup>100</sup>Specialisations: A. Industrial design project; sustainable society – planning solutions and products. B. Furniture and Product. C. Furniture and Technology

<sup>101</sup> A program where a non-specialised approach is aiming at 'better equipping the students to meet future challenges'.

<sup>102</sup> The brief for the first test stated that participants should spent maximum 1 hour on the task as their immediate, rather than reflected, choices primarily were of interest. As a result of the long time participants [in the first test] reported having spent on the task the number of objects to select was reduced to five for the second test and the [written] brief was reformulated to urge the participants to report their immediate choices.



assumption that when practicing, *the most present frame of reference*, [the information which is easiest accessible] would be different from when studying.

Learning from interviews with these designers after they submitted their results, the site was made even more accessible and straightforward in preparation for the main investigation. Three out of the four course directors, contacted before the start of the this, also judged the site as very accessible. One course director foresaw problems after having engaged in the workshop herself. She concluded that the tasks, not the site, proved to be much more demanding than when first described to her and even at her first encounter.

*There are thus reasons to believe that the process of intellectually identifying objects to fit under the theme 'Affective Sustainability' is mentally demanding and thus more time consuming than tasks of similar nature but on different themes.*

In all, 17 exercises were completed of which eight (8) resulted from the main investigation. This is an overall answer rate of 11.5% while only 7% for the main investigation. These figures would validate a quantitative survey addressing several hundred respondents. For a qualitative survey based on a questionnaire the answer rate is on the verge of being acceptable.

*It is therefore important to emphasise that this investigation was designed with the aim to learn if affective sustainability is a lived or a learned experience and based on the assumption that a low answer rate would indicate a lived experience while a high answer rate would indicate a learned experience.*

Moreover, if the respondents had found the exercise fairly swift to complete [in which case the investigation would have come out as a proper survey] this as such would indicated that affective sustainability is more of a learned experience. Instead the main investigation evolved into a workshop and thereby manifested a tendency, which was made apparent during the tests: the participants had difficulties accessing what is stored in their own mind. The investigation's character as a workshop was further emphasised by the fact that dialogues could take place to learn more about the reasons behind the respondents' interaction with the tasks.

The aim of the investigation was intended more to evaluate and further explore the grounded theory underpinning affective sustainability than to define it. This was made clear in chapter II, Methodology and Methods. To be explored, a field must be kept open and as free as possible from the investigator's interference. Examples of situations with a high level of interference are (i) small focus groups or (ii) a limited number of group discussions and also (iii) pre-selected images for the curator task. Either of these methods would, as it were, be obstructive to fair conclusions. Discussions, interaction between participants and the presented images would respectively have given certain directions and thus biased the results.

Section 3:1 is the report and analysis on how the participants as curators chose to illustrate affective sustainability by a selection of objects. In the next section, 3:2, the report and analysis concerns how they decided to describe its essence in words. In both sections, the analyses explore subject areas, which following the investigation could profit from further clarification. Cultural belonging and its eventual impact on the reported results are commented rather

than reported in section 3:3. Finally, section 3:4 is a summary of the investigation turned workshop as a whole.

### 3:1. Affective sustainability illustrated by objects and designs

#### 3:1:1 THE SELECTIONS

There were two very distinct trends to be observed in the selection process: Firstly, the domination of *objects with a generic expression* (38) of which only a few could pass as vernacular. Generic objects were among the choices in *all* completed exercises and appeared more than once in several. Secondly, *objects influenced by modernism*<sup>103</sup> added up to 24<sup>104</sup>, of which 18 were chairs. Chairs totalled 23, when 2 choices dating from periods before modernism and 3 more genuinely contemporary were included. They made up for one (1) to three (3) choices in 11 of the completed exercises and in 2 of the non-completed.

The choice of a *lamp* re-occurred 9 times in a modern or modern/contemporary form. A *moving object*, an automotive<sup>105</sup>, was selected 9 times of which 6 were cars. The common denominator for the automotives, of which two (2) were boats, were the period when they were designed or to which their designs were related: late 1940<sup>s</sup> or during the 1950<sup>s</sup> (Elg, 2005).

The abundance of *objects with a generic expression* among those selected is to no real surprise as they represent a family of objects rather than a specific object, which facilitates the choice. These objects are what Le Corbusier called 'types' (Marcus, 2005). The scarcity of *vernacular objects* among the choices is on the other hand a contradiction. There was no mention of any truly vernacular object though several of these in fact share common and long lasting features over cultural as well as geographical borders and could merit a place as a generic object<sup>106</sup>. The common belief or view might however be that these objects are not relevant when taken out of their original context, including time and place.

*The choice of generic objects gives a certain direction concerning affective sustainability: they point towards traditions as experiences, which are handed down. The resulting objects, constantly reproduced, appear either in their original design, slightly refined or lending principal features/solutions to a design made to fit a changing context. Generic objects furthermore indicate a direction, away from what is thought to be locally, regionally or nationally specific to the general, which fits almost globally. The fact that vernacular objects are exceptions in the selections underpins this conclusion. Are these objects regarded as part of a heritage, which will be deemed as historical - part of an era - rather than flowing with time?*

The second trend, the frequent identification of objects with modernist features, included also vehicles. Why then go for the modernist objects? A majority of the selected objects with these features deal with so called *eternal problems*; sitting, eating, drinking, lighting and so on. There are none among them

<sup>103</sup> The division into i) influenced by modernism and ii) contemporary, is of course not at all precise. Experience shows rather that these denominations are quite subjective.

<sup>104</sup> Vehicles are not included in this figure

<sup>105</sup> 'Relating to self-propelled vehicles or machines'. (Merriam-Webster, 2006)

<sup>106</sup> An exhibition at 'Centre Culturel Suédoise' in Paris did successfully explore this theme as already described in chapter I with reference to Edelkoort (2005).

though, which could be said to truly conform to the ‘form follows function’ device. Arne Jacobsen and Alvar Aalto were the only designers whose designed objects appeared more than twice, five (5) and four (4) times respectively. They are both known for their adherence to the aesthetic, even if in slightly different ways. Jacobsen’s aesthetic has features of the artistic, ‘it was the interplay between aesthetics, technical skill, and in the end, also incorporating utility’ (Tojner, 1994 b, p. 82). while Aalto’s approaches humanism, ‘... a softening human touch is needed to mould societies, cities, buildings and even the smallest machine-made objects into something positive to the human psyche ...’ (Reed, 1998, p. 95).

*An object, designed with regard to the aesthetic rather than with regard to ‘form follow function’ and which at the same time successfully deals with an ‘eternal problem’ or an ‘eternal service’<sup>107</sup> seems to merit a place among the affectively sustainable.*

### 3:1:2. ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTIONS: THE MOVING OBJECT

The re-occurring inclusion of vehicles in the selections made by the respondents merits some further exploration into the design of *means of human transportation*, as these decisively merit a place among *eternal problems*. This subject area was little explored in the deconstruction process<sup>108</sup> even if the aesthetic always appears to have played an important role for these means since the time when a horse was the most common and appropriate way to get around. A riding horse or a horse pulling a carriage intended for people was chosen for other reason than pure function. An affective perspective was applied. Horses working in the field should look strong. To compare, the physical perspective is today dominating the aesthetic of a tractor or a lorry but as the debate [and awareness] has evolved, *looking strong* is part of the aesthetic, as even a machine should look *its function* (Bayley, 1999).

Volvo, the then Swedish car manufacturer, faced increasing problems with their car models during the 1980s. The absolute successes of the three preceding decades – which among other things saw ‘The Saint’ drive a Volvo P 1800 - were not followed by anything comparable, though the inside of the cars showed different kinds of improvements concerning performance and safety. The angular cars did not sell very well even if acceptable on the home-markets. Worse though, they induced an overall change in the image of the Volvo brand, which was not wholly intended: Away went the ‘sporty but safe’ and in came ‘strong and safe but rather dull’. Aiming at preventing serious damage, a group of directors within Volvo chose to tackle the problem with an approach which seemed to be the least demanding of time and resources: an analysis of the design features all the former successful models shared! Decisions concerning the looks of the new models resulting from this problem-solving process did contribute to the successes, which were then still to come. To great surprise within the company, it was later said (Gyll, 2004). Peter Horbury<sup>109</sup>, who arrived at Volvo in 1991 as head of design,

<sup>107</sup> Friedman (2005) on design *as service*. ‘The idea that design is service highlights an explicit distinction between art and design. The artist produces art for his or hers own interest. ....The designer works for someone else. The designer serves another human being as a basic condition of professional practice.’

<sup>108</sup> Chapter III

<sup>109</sup> Design Director, Volvo 1991-2002.

does not put it straightforwardly: 'I actually hate retro. That's not what we are about. But the positive arc from the front lamp to the back one was there since the Volvo PV444 of 1947'.<sup>110</sup> (Chapman, 1999, p.113). Though many cars have become *streamlined* [or look-a-likes] with the help of CAD, the *curvy* Volvo PV 444 was designed long before this tool was available.

When Bayley (1999) states that 'a car must show on the outside what is inside' (p. 26), it becomes evident that he is talking about the translation of the pragmatic into something poetic [see above: *look its function*]. Chapman, author and co-editor with Bayley of RCA's 'Moving Objects', notes that epoch-making cars were not designed in the 1930s when it was all about 'Fordism' or early design *automata* and all cars actually looked the same, but rather from the mid 1940s to the end of the 1960s. These, popularly often called 'Classic Cars' have since been widely imitated. Horbury remarks in the final phase of the interview "Form following function does not actually sell cars, you see." (Chapman, p. 115, 1999)

Almost 6 years later, Chris Bangle, the BMW group design director, says in an interview: 'Form does still follow function' and lends contemporary architectural shapes to his designs, "to optically take out weight of the increased technical content". He has been widely criticised for 'ruining the BMW cars', not least by introducing the angular surfaces, which started with the 7 series in 2001 (Stones, 2005, p. 13.). The S series have evidently revitalised the Volvo brand whilst a 'Stop Chris Bangle Petition' has gathered more than 12000 signatures from BMW customers.

In January 2006 Alfa Romeo introduced the Brera model, supposed to be their new flagship. According to reporters on motoring the car has been very well received (Thompson, 2006). The designer, Giorgetto Giugiaro, explains the name Brera, which actually means 'the black panther', as a perfect name for something that is beautiful to look at but can act like a tiger. This statement brings us back to Bayley and his references to notions about the translation of the pragmatic into poetry or at least something that stirs passion! According to one journalist, 'the most appealing aspect of the car's [Brera's] styling is its classical references: The rear window is reminiscent of Giulietta Sprint (vintage car, authors comment), while the bonnet is decidedly Fifties' (Thompson, p. 32, 2006). In the same article Giugiaro [the designer] also confirms when interviewed, the well-known practice among car manufacturers of relaying on the reaction at first impression [often of prototypes, authors comment] at motor shows for the decision to put a particular car into production.

This confession suggests that 'visceral design' (Norman, 2004) is crucial for cars *but* that immediate perception has also to indicate *pleasure of use*, otherwise buyers will not bother to learn more about performance, capacity, and security.

Though diverging on certain central issues concerning vehicle design, Bayley, Bangle and Horbury all express surprise when it comes to its place in the world of design. 'It is possible to see a book on 'a century of design' without a single car in it, argues Bangle in the interview (Stones, 2005). Furthermore, as stated in 'Moving Objects', the literature is thin, this despite 'the enormous social, economic and cultural significance of the car' (p. 233)<sup>111</sup>.

<sup>110</sup> The model Horbury is referring to is called S80

<sup>111</sup> There are few autobiographies or biographies of designers in this field. The names behind the designs still influencing automotive design today are rarely mentioned in well known general

*A brief look into the history and contemporary state of automotive design reveals how rather few, but epoch-making car body designs continue to lend features to new successful car models, without them necessarily becoming retro designs. Realising that features known as appealing to users are adjusted and successfully matched with technical demands and development is an important input when analysing the concept of affective sustainability. Likewise is knowing that the first encounter: the initial impression a new car design makes on its presumed buyers, is assigned a crucial role in the design process, which might explain the existence of the 'world car': a model with an universal appeal.*

### 3:1:3 ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTIONS: ACTS OF LOW OR HIGH CAPACITY

The conclusions concerning automotive design raise a number of questions, which have to be dealt with as part of the analyses of the results from the workshop. Almost all of us have had the opportunity to go for a ride in one of these *classic cars*. Do we experience this as an object, which is really significant for its current context? The answer would most surely be negative. The impression is rather of an old car. Still, it was the classic car versions, which were included in the selections in the workshop.

None of the participants added solely *a car* or even *a classic car* though, which would have been in line with the tendency to include generic objects, like, a *knife* or a *teacup* in the selections. Going for a generic object is apparently a way to name a design rather than an object even if the former has resulted in a number of objects, which are fulfilling the same function or doing the same service to a human. Learning from recent discourse, *to design* is in more respects than one *to service* by creating an object, which is doing a service (Friedman, 2005). The participants nevertheless selected a specific car. However technologically obsolete it might be, it is, drawing on Friedman, still doing a service, as a design.

According to Norman in his work on emotional design, classic cars are normally: 'viscerally exciting' and 'classic examples of the power of visceral design' (p. 68, 2004,). The 'behavioural' part of the design does not seem to matter. In that sense this object, the car, has not retained its significance [which other objects might continued to have, an old chair for example might be just as comfortable as a new one]. On the other hand, it appears still to be relevant on 'the reflective level'. Even if we assume that the initial choice was made immediately and without reflection, this would have come in later and confirmed or rejected the choice. The feel-good criterion, which includes things like self-image, has thus been fulfilled after reflection.

Wilson, when describing the power struggle between the conscious and the unconscious, advises us not to analyse our intuition [he uses the term 'gut feeling'] if it makes us feel-good, but to follow it, thus to avoid too much reflection (2002). These two approaches offer coinciding views on affective sustainability as lived experience, which is the basis for intuition, but differ concerning the capacity of this feeling:

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design encyclopaedias like: 'Design of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century' by Charlotte and Peter Fiell. Exceptions exist, e.g. Raymond Loewy (Studebaker) and Ferdinand Porsche, but these designers transferred their experiences from automotive design into other parts of industrial design. The Design Yearbook 2005 edited by Marcel Wanders includes the car Smart Roadster though and car design has as well its own yearbook as small encyclopaedias. Literature with an academic take on automotive design is however rare. The reason might be that automotive designs always have been regarded as part of classified corporate documents, commercially important and thus not accessible to outsiders (RCA, 1999)

1. Reflection serves only to distort the feeling by introducing factors, which refer to human *ways of living* and hence are constantly changing.<sup>112</sup> This would be high capacity.
2. Reflection is a necessary compliment to the feeling as there is an apparent risk of confusing affective sustainability with [personal or collective] nostalgia when judging purely by intuition. This would be low capacity.

Returning to Norman's arguments, the three levels on which humans interact with objects and which hence also should instruct design; visceral (unconscious), behavioural (unconscious) and reflective (conscious) are always involved when theorising as well as practising design. According to him, it is possible to decide on which level to design. If 'visceral' and 'reflective' to a certain extent are oppositions, *a design* could be said to work on the visceral level whilst *an object* works on the reflective level. He regards visceral design as by definition rather 'simple' [in the meaning of 'not sophisticated'] and consistent over people and cultures. The whole idea of this level of design is to attract, if not necessary keep, the eye of the observer. Norman admits thus that not all attractive designs have a long life, mainly those, which are the results of "pattern matching". These refer, if not necessarily correspond, to conditions that people are genetically programmed for. Great designs that survive forever are rare, according to him.<sup>113</sup> Building on Norman, affective sustainability would either be equivalent to visceral design or the result of a 'gift' [comparable to those of great artists or writers]. His comparison is rather strange as these are not engaged in solving problems and providing service to other humans, neither are they responsible to their public. On the other hand, the study of 'greatness' has, in many disciplines, resulted in added knowledge and there is strictly speaking no reason why design should be an exception. The acknowledgement of lived experience has evidently not erased all *the mysticism* attached to how we make use of our inner capacities.

*Following the high respective/ low capacity approach discussed above, affective sustainability could be ascribed to the object or the design respectively.*

Which alternative finds support in the outcome of the workshop? Posing this question is important, as the answer will indicate the degree of sustainability involved. If a *design* is experienced without reflection, this might not, until after reflection, take the form of *an object* in a process influenced by *here and now*. On the other hand, if an object is immediately perceived, it is by definition already confirmed and reflection is not a precondition for its implied function. The outcome of the workshop is hence ambiguous on this issue:

- *the design* rather than *the object* is affectively sustainable: The participants have named a generic object or chosen a kind of *type* object; a classic car, a modernist object.
- *the object* rather than *the design* is affectively sustainable: Already the first analysis of the results suggested that choosing objects to fit the theme of affective sustainability seems to be mentally very demanding. Designers and design students supposedly have decent knowledge of design history

<sup>112</sup> The idea of *ways of living* and *ways of being* are discussed throughout chapter III.

<sup>113</sup> This will be further explored in section 3:1:5 of this chapter: 'Affect includes Emotion'



and a fairly good overview of the discipline, enabling them to recall five (5) lasting designs.

A prosaic but not improbable explanation would be that when an object is mass-produced, it is less appreciated as an object and more as a design. On the other hand, something unique is often cherished as an object. According to Bastick (2003) we unconsciously experience the extreme to the cost of what is in abundance and where it is more difficult to differentiate one from another. This would mean that an object, which is in abundance, would not easily be experienced. If it was experienced before it became mass-produced or very popular but loses its significance through these processes, the actual design might well last in memory. This could be compared to the *classic car*, which is lasting though technically insignificant.

However, Wilson (2002) argues that what is being developed unconsciously is generally difficult to access on command. He does not differentiate between eventual levels of unconscious experience, like the visceral or the behavioural, but introduces the notion of 'the adaptive unconscious'. According to him, this part of our unconscious is quite accurate as it stores a lot of *information as it is* without any prioritisation. This latter stage is handled by accessibility, which depends on experience; how often a concept has been used in the past, and how 'energised' it is or how recently it has been used. Accessibility is, in short, a matter of the concept's relevance to the person in question. Also important is the 'feel-good' factor, which helps us to prioritise, unconsciously, in line with how we want things to be and therefore simultaneously creates a 'battleground' where accuracy is the opponent. Experience is then again involved in what is more commonly called 'gut feeling', to quote Wilson: '... and triggered a gut feeling before the conscious mind knows what is going on.' (p. 32)

Drawing on Wilson's arguments, a possible scenario would be: the concept affective sustainability was not formerly known to the respondents and had to be mentally translated, to be fully understood. This is a conscious process. The result of this translation acts as a stimulus and is thus crucial for what happens next: it stimulates the adaptive unconscious and *accurate images* [accurate in relation to the translation] are projected. If these, are not readily accessible due to the concept's current irrelevance for the respondent, she may either feel frustrated by an overwhelming quantity of information, a kind of blur, among which she can not prioritise or is confused by some kind of void. The result might be either defensive: 'I give up' or determined: 'I'd better try to construct: to make something up'. This latter is a reflective phase in which culture, peers, ideas about what you should choose play a defining role.

This is not to say that the respondents, who did follow the exercise through, constructed the result. Once they had translated the stimulus, they might well, due to relevance, have had the information more readily accessible and have got a vision of the objects they wanted to include. Wilson does not specifically engage in the issue of translation of stimuli. The 'fast track' to the adaptive unconscious is normally a direct stimulus, in the case of the online workshop, images of objects to choose from. Wilson's arguments have strengthened the rationale behind the decision not to apply the method of displaying images for this investigation. This would have restricted the choices and risked biasing the selection. Even if a complimentary free choice had been offered, the respondents would already have been 'primed' on certain images. Furthermore, even if these

stimuli activated the unconscious to make choices without consulting the conscious, reflection could easily, due to the artificial situation, have changed the choices in the direction of the more suitable; socially, professionally rather than affectively.

*The introduction of the notion adaptive unconscious offers various explanations not solely concerning the results of the workshop but also the respondents' way of interacting with the tasks. If we assume that information on what is affectively sustainable design is stored in the unconscious part of the memory, it stresses the weight of the intuitive and emphasises in addition observation as part of the design process.*

### 3:1:4 THE SELECTIONS ANALYSED: CONSCIOUSNESS AND CAPACITY

What we do not know about ourselves might nonetheless be possible for others to observe. The 'thoughtless acts', as observed by Fulton Suri (2005) and discussed in chapter III, could be referred to as acts of lower capacity. Wilson's story about the man who always described himself as shy when in fact none of his acquaintances regarded him as such, offers an additional perspective: these acts are not necessarily confined to the basics of human ways of being. The man in the story had been shy in his youth and was not aware that he had overcome this problem. His shyness had even prevented him from applying for certain jobs. The fact that we may act out something, which is quite different from what we consciously believe, is of course important to take into consideration in the design process.

As was argued in section 2:1 of this chapter, *Four Schools of Thought*, it is reasonable to believe that designers are sometimes divided between what they rationally think is right and what they feel is right. Arne Jacobsen could seldom explain why he had chosen a certain design solution, which resulted in him distancing himself from it only to shortly afterwards tell the client that this was one of the best things he had ever achieved! (Tojner, 1994 a, Louisiana Revy, 2002) On the basis of what has been argued here, it is clear that observations and experiences are made and stored unconsciously. When used they are referred to as intuition. This does not of course imply that what is consciously stored is of lesser rank, but is a claim for intuition to be regarded as also resulting in high capacity acts.

Concerning 'the unimportance of form' Jasper Morrisson argues in an article (1991): 'Occasionally a form will arrive, either through hard analysis or, more satisfyingly, intuition and chance. Restricting the probability of finding appropriate form to these two unreliable sources is a mistake.' There is now reason to oppose this view and to judge intuition as being quite reliable after all: it is experience, gathered through interest and opportunities, processed by the genetically determined talent and stored, even if unconsciously. Wilson calls this 'informed intuition' as opposed to 'uninformed', which could concern areas, which are less relevant to us and hence we have gathered less experience. If we accept the notion of 'informed intuition', Wilson suggest, as already pointed out, that we do not analyse the resulting 'gut feeling' to much – which Arne Jacobsen also refrained from doing, as noted above!

In a debate on the PHD-Design mailing list, Matthews and Sless among others contest the notion of *the irrational decision-maker* (2006). This underlines

the relevance of a comment by an interpreter of Wilson's work, Lundh, professor of applied psychology at the University of Lund:

'No doubt there are great advances made in research in cognitive science, but the new, all encompassing theoretical synthesis is yet to be seen.'<sup>114</sup> (2005)

The debate on the list took off on the subject of *automatic responses in language* and continued to discuss the balance between 'the social and the emotional' in causing human responses. This in turn raised the question whether the view that our conscious mind is *in charge* is in reality an illusion: if we are ruled by the unconscious in fact. The debate reached all the way up to 'neuronal activity'.

Using intuition as a design construct is, according to several joining the debate, for the designer to transfer something he experiences subjectively to an artefact he is designing for someone else, to presume it is more general. If it is totally subjective, Morrison is right to judge this source as quite unreliable. As is also argued on the discussion list debate 'the designer has to use his/hers emotions to identify, judge and transfer emotions of others to artefacts and vice-versa. The issue of bias comes in here.' (Yammiyavar, 2006)

The question is thus: How subjective is our unconscious mind? One group of debaters on the discussion list is, like Wilson, raising arguments with reference to the work and research undertaken by the neuroscientist Damasio in the early 1990s<sup>115</sup>. Damasio is primarily known for his critical writing based on the issue of the artificial separation of body and mind, a subject initially actualised in the analysis and deconstruction in chapter III. The scientific work of the Damasio couple and their colleagues, as referred to by Wilson and others, offers a theory of how the unconscious part of our mind works and how this affects human life in general. According to these and other neuroscientists we ought consequently to accept the unconscious as something, which is not totally subjective as when a child unconsciously learns complicated grammatical rules when learning to speak a common language. They do not learn the language *their way* but fairly correctly. The language may then improve or deteriorate mostly due to social factors (Lundh, 2005)

The opposing group of debaters build their arguments on Wittgenstein<sup>116</sup> and suggests that with neuroscience and the empirical results achieved within this discipline has also come a tendency to judge conceptual issues as empirical. One of Wittgenstein's main points concern the interaction between the mind and the world around and the important role of language and grammar to make sense of emotions. To refer only to physical states is according to him, to cripple an affective condition to the point of refusing to take in correct information. Put at its simplest: *It is easy to see that someone is angry but not why she is angry*. This has to be expressed by other means. Wilson does not make any references to Wittgenstein.

The polarisation referred to here will probably persist until there is (repetition) '... an all encompassing theoretical synthesis', (Lundh).

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<sup>114</sup> Translated from Swedish by the author.

<sup>115</sup> Antonio Damasio, his wife Hanna and his colleague Antoine Bechara was referred to already in chapter III.

<sup>116</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein had a very negative stand towards scientific investigation of the mind. This fact has, according to Matthews (2006), meant that the deep and important observations of the mind that he undertook have been obscured. His most referred-to book is 'Philosophical Investigations', 1958.

*It might not be possible to judge whether it is the design or the designed object, which is affectively sustainable. There is however reason to claim that unconscious acts are not necessarily of lower capacity. It is more probable the interaction between the conscious and the unconscious determines the capacity of the acts, as does informed and uniformed intuition respectively. Experience appears nevertheless to have a central position. Those who through experience have gathered and stored a lot of information on designed objects might intuitively feel that this is correct when a certain stimulus appears. Concerning design and following the above, this feeling might well concern a design but with references to different objects where this design is present: in its simplest case, a generic object. For those with less experience the intuitive feeling might not arrive and they have to switch on their conscious mind and go out and look, to interact with the world and be more conceptual in their approach, referring to basic needs and eternal problems.*

### 3:1:5 ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTIONS: AFFECT INCLUDES EMOTION

*Emotional* does not mean affective, but is one *affective reaction*. The often encountered and somewhat careless use of affect, equalling it to emotion, is commented on briefly earlier in this work but the following quote further highlight the difference:

‘Emotional behaviour seems most usefully considered as part of a broad class of effective interactions, the primary consequences of which appear to change the organism’s relationship to its external environment. Feelings or affective behaviour, on the other hand, can be distinguished as a generic class of interactions, the principal effects of which are localizable within the reacting organism rather than in the exteroceptive environment.’ (Bastick, 2003, p. 265)<sup>117</sup>

The workshop showed that lack of awareness concerning this distinction poses the risk of affective sustainability being slightly misinterpreted. A few selections included objects like souvenirs, Christmas decorations, my first radio, my grand parents’ china and my mother’s sewing machine. Is there anything more to learn from these choices other than that they are examples of an individual and more purely emotional sustainability, what is normally called nostalgia, rather than affective?

In the first place, they constitute an important reminder: We are moving around in a field where the borders are ambiguously defined. It is impossible to judge where emotions might have dominated over other affective reactions in the participants’ choices. The emotional context is, according to Bastick, unique to the individual. Furthermore, he claims that we have an intuitive sense of relations, perception and emotion occurs together, which would determine how the participants experience the stimulus *affective sustainability* as such. The two elements in this concept could evoke, what Bastick calls ‘kinaesthetic sensations’<sup>118</sup> (p. 69). If these are not concordant, an intuitive understanding might not be possible.

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<sup>117</sup> Bastick quotes here J.V. Brady (1970)

<sup>118</sup> Associations, which are ‘psychophysiological’: concerns functional characteristics and are mainly made when an object is perceived. They are related to experience and not always relevant to that what is perceived but initiated by emotions. This type of sensations occurs also when words are perceived.

Secondly, affect concerns all the five senses and sensual judgements are ruled by emotions, as is all cognitive activity, which was discussed already in chapter III (Morse, 2006, referring to Damasio). Returning to Norman, emotions reflect our personal experiences, associations and memories. Consequently they act on all three levels of design: the visceral, where they create immediate appeal, the behavioural; user appeal and the reflective; self-image appeal. Norman does not, as Dewey (1934), propose that one of these levels play a significant role as *guarding the entrance* to the human mind and consequently he does not refer to Dewey. However, considering the essence of Norman's reasoning there is even though support for Dewey's notions on the subject: *If an object does not attract the eye, if it is seen but not registered, even unconsciously, it will never reach the state of being tested for user appeal or, using Norman's vocabulary, reach the 'user level'.* Neither will it be reflected upon. Even if someone points to the object for you to recognise, it will be immediately rejected if it has not been initially accepted: according to Dewey, aesthetically, according to Norman on the visceral level, which is mainly about appearance. The difference lies in the definition of aesthetics: For Dewey it is appearance and immediate appreciation of use whilst for Norman appearance and 'the pleasure and effectiveness of use' are two different level of unconscious reaction, the visceral and the behavioural.

Norman and Wilson do not agree on the closely related notions of 'self-image appeal' and '*feel good* factor', although they seem to be in accord concerning several other issues. Norman claims that 'self-image appeal is the result of reflection, thus a conscious act, while Wilson argues that the '*feel good*' factor is part of the adaptive unconscious.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there are differing positions within current academic discourse concerning the balance between the conscious and the unconscious. Even though Norman's notion of the omnipresent emotions appears adequate, he assigns more importance to reflected reaction and actions also what concerns emotions. However, his views coincide with Wilson's regarding the existence of reflected activity, which is not conscious. Conscious as well as unconscious human reactions have generally both a cognitive and an affective component. Understanding Bastick, he supports this conclusion and adds also a 'motor' component and names these three components 'an emotional set'. After having further reviewed Dewey and followed Wilson's reasoning it is as very plausible that the process of judging an object as suiting one's self image might well be so immediate and swift as to be regarded as unconscious. In this context Chapman's (2005) notion of 'Phantile drives', design components, which are added with the lone intention to set off this process, is interesting but also alarming: if the design of these drives are not the result of profound knowledge, they might easy take the form of superficial manipulation, which Chapman also is aware off and names 'cheap tricks' (p. 161).

But what if the intuition fails to produce the *feel good* factor? We would most certainly start to reflect and construct as we are trying to fulfil a task. The more reflected our self-image is, the more it tries to comply with our *ways of living* in the social world. The opposite, the immediate, un-reflected control if something is reconcilable with our self-image should thus be "pattern matching" and a result of our *ways of being*, to cite Norman. Apparent matches within some of the selections suggesting specific reflected self-images could perhaps be found through a deeper analysis, which is beyond the scope and competence of this work. The variety within the selections implies otherwise: that those who

submitted the exercise apparently did not construct. Those who did not submit and this is guessing, might have found no other option than to construct, which they then found so time consuming as to refrain. Several comments as part of the discussions after the second test and in e-mail dialogues with some participants in the main investigation, concerned how different their choices would have been, had they acted as curator for the same exhibition again.

*To name an affectively sustainable design [as manifested in an object] is either done swiftly and predominantly without much reflection or almost impossible to do due to the time the reflection consumes. Either way it is a reflection of the self-image but with the important difference, that in the first case it is reflexive, in the second reflected. The participants in this workshop were able to observe the result of their own behaviour in the choices but not their behaviour as such. The more reflected an object named affectively sustainable design is, the less sustainable it risks being therefore.*

### 3:1:6 ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTIONS: REDEFINING THE ROLE OF THE AESTHETIC.

Norman (2004) claims that what takes place on the visceral level is a value judgement of different dimensions of society: how the subject relates herself to these dimensions or a dimension, in the case of the workshop, an object. According to him the aesthetic plays a dominant role in this value judgement. Is the role of the aesthetic in affective sustainability made apparent by the selections in the workshop? We have to recall Dewey (1929, 1934) and Pye (1968, 1978) and thus recollect that, according to them, aesthetic is intrinsic, a presupposition for the choices being made at all if not necessarily sustained. Further to their reasoning, art and design begin to exist at this level, before reflective thought has arisen. If art and design, on the other hand, by repeated encounters continue to exist and inspire “new personal realisations and experiences” (Dewey, 1934) they have sustained, which there is reason to believe is the case in the selections here. The reason for an object, or a design for that matter, passing this *threshold* may be personal though, as argued above.

As the choices in several of the selections can be typified: generic, *the first of its kind*<sup>119</sup>, there is reason to look for a common denominator beyond the purely personal. The first and most logical to consider is *simplicity*<sup>120</sup>. However, this is a value judgement open to subjective interpretations and has therefore limited validity as a parameter. *Simplification* might lead to simplicity but is not a precondition for this. Our senses are trying to simplify to understand (Papanek, 1985), which contrary to common belief is not necessarily catered for by simplicity.

*Affective sustainability has all the characteristics of a value judgement. It is initially made on the un-reflected level where aesthetics have a defining impact. As part of affective behaviour this value judgment takes place in an inner process but is also part of ‘the emotional set’, which embraces also a cognitive and a motor component and interacts with the external environment.*

<sup>119</sup> Several participants used this expression.

<sup>120</sup> Simplicity, the mantra of the modernist movement, has since had major influence on design and “Next Simplicity” is 2005 the name of Philip Design’s main strategic design project with “Sense and Simplicity” as a unifying principle for their new generation of designs (Marzano, 2006).



Tobias Lau, one of the researchers behind the ‘Massive Change’ project<sup>121</sup>, which in many respects is both interesting and groundbreaking, argues that we have to go from ‘modern living’ to ‘sustainable living’. The most radical proposal for this move concerns ‘aesthetic and form’. According to the proponents of this project, these parameters ought in design to be replaced by ‘economic and resource capacity’<sup>122</sup>, meaning that the emphasis in a value judgement ought to be on a pragmatic relation between the object and the viewer or user: on creating a bond built on capacity rather than aesthetic. Per Feldthaus, a Danish architect, said on the subject during ERA 05<sup>123</sup>, that a judgement involving aesthetics is rather that of a specific work by a certain designer, focusing his talent: the intuitive as well as the unique. According to him, this type of judgement is difficult to bring together with efforts to solve general problems on a global basis. These problems demand scientific methods, repeatable processes and the participation of groups of people representing different disciplines, of which design is only one. This and related views are not uncommon when sustainability and sustainable societies are discussed. In 1988 Thackara proposed that one solution would be to go beyond the object, and in his latest writing (2005) he pursues this path: a shift from the design of objects to the design of systems and services to improve quality of life. Sustainable design is still, according to Helgeson (2006 b), a quite muddled concept, which not least in Sweden is mostly linked to ecological concerns and to ‘design for all’, focused on people with a physical handicap.

A contradiction is thus created between not only ‘things’ and sustainability but also between aesthetics and sustainability. The aesthetic perspective is not unique or reserved for objects. According to many philosophers, nature forms our aesthetic sense. The heavy impact on nature imposed by our contemporary societies is much in focus, but sadly overlooks *visual pollution*: all too often the built environment demonstrates no regard for the aesthetic, sometimes even in the name of sustainability.

The rationale for the positions just referred to is hence not immediately evident. Badly designed or products *styled*<sup>124</sup> without a distinct purpose are contributing to a sense of wasted resources. Probably even worse is the abundance of products, which normally had a quite long life [and thus could merit the resources they consumed] but now due to fashion, lifestyle, capitalism and consumerism have a very short life. Furthermore, there is reason to believe (i) that aesthetics as a reflected elitist position and therefore also un-egalitarian still rules and (ii) also that the role of the aesthetic in sustainability is denied or not sufficiently researched and recognised.

*The selections in the workshop emphasise the important role of the aesthetic but bring to the fore the notion of simplification as another defining parameter for affective sustainability. This implies that the concept is relevant not only on the visceral level but also on the user level. Though unconsciously made, the*

<sup>121</sup> Initiated by Bruce Mau. Research done by the ‘Institute Without Boundaries’. (Emilson, 2005)

<sup>122</sup> Not to be confused with the notion “*affective capacity*”, which is used by Kwinter (2001) and referred to in chapter III.

<sup>123</sup> Conference in Copenhagen, September 26 – 28, 2005, [www.era05.com](http://www.era05.com) (Emilson, 2005)

<sup>124</sup> Styling has come to mean something negative in design. Logically, with the emphasis on the aesthetic, which this research so far has resulted in, styling ought to be re-valued. There is thus reason to differentiate between styling with and without a clear purpose.

*selections were based not only on “pattern matching” but also on understanding basic intended functions.*

#### SUMMARISING COMMENTS

The aim for this part of the research merits repetition to enhance the summary:

(a) To suggest the type of experience guiding the selections: high response rate would indicate a swift selection process based on learned experience. Low response rate would indicate a demanding selection process trying to access lived experience. (b) To give material for continued analysis of notions vital to the concept.

To start with (a): a majority of those invited to participate in the investigation chose not to or could not fulfil them, although expressing serious intentions and interest in the tasks. This indicates that affective sustainability is a lived experience.

Did those who actually completed the tasks then construct and convey a learned experience? There are other possible explanations, which are based on the relevance for the individual of the actual concept. For those who decided they could not fulfil the tasks the information was very hard to access due to its current lack of relevance for the respondent and/or the fact that her level of experience in the field was low. The time and effort needed to reflect and construct something, to try and produce answers, which resulted in a *feel good* experience would be considerable. An investigation, which brings no special compensation to the respondent, cannot claim top priority and does not allow for that time. Those who completed could access the information, as the subject was more relevant to them: had a *more prominent place in the unconscious*.

The introduction of a concept, which was not formerly known at least not in this formulation, meant that there was also room for different interpretations and understanding and a need for, in Bastick's words, 'kinaesthetic concordance', which further complicated the fulfilment of the tasks. A meaning can never be "fixed, single and unambiguous" (Schwandt, 2001, p.115). This sets new hurdles when the data is to be analysed. The preferred approach, a kind of hermeneutic understanding, cannot account for *the only truth* but the underlying aim is to treat the data very openly and *present the result of the analysis as one rather than the only possible understanding*. McAuley (2004) concludes that whenever hermeneutics are involved we must understand that, "... it is a way of approaching research that is based on the notion that research is a human, subjective activity but that this humanity is a crucial resource in the development of understanding."(p. 201)

To continue with (b): Each concluding comment below will make a key word reference [in bold italics] to some of the four categories vital to the adaptation process and thus informing the concept of affective sustainability. The choices of generic objects and 'the first of its kind objects' underline the importance of ***tradition*** – experiences, which are handed down. With this in mind, it is surprising that no vernacular objects and not one piece of architecture found their way into the selections.

The references to designers who are linked to what is named the *modern aesthetic* give certain indications. They have neither as far as is known been

engaged in debating perfection and beauty nor in promoting 'form follows function'. Learning from these designers it appears to be *simplification* rather than *simplicity*, which attracts the attention on the visceral and behavioural level. This would suggest an enlargement of the aesthetic notion to encompass function in the sense of *understanding the object*. The choice of generic products and individual comments on 'the eternal problem' indicates again that 'the use' has to be immediately apparent, which poses a particular contradiction concerning 'form follows function'. Consequently, simplicity as such should not warrant a place among the affectively sustainable, even if *immediate recognition of use* does. This would imply that simplicity, when too refined, obscures the function of the object. Function is not only a result of physical characteristics.

Simplicity in its purest form may thus reduce objects to designs. Does this in fact mean that it is the object and not the design, which is affectively sustainable? The question formulated this way refers back to *automotive design*. Though there are accusations of retro design being a trend within the industry, there is enough evidence to recognise that also beyond fashion, design on the visceral level is very important. However, worth noting is that Norman's (2004) distinction between visceral and behavioural design is not totally justified. He argues rightly that these levels mostly work together but goes on to claim that if one single level is in practice it is likely to be the reflective. This reasoning is not in line with Damasio, Wilson and Bastick's: the unconscious constantly influences our reactions and actions. The example of the *classic car* shows in the first place that *affective competence* is not only about appearance (visceral design according to Norman) but also about un-consciously experiencing 'the pleasure and effectiveness of use' (characterising behavioural design) and secondly that these two are intimately linked. They cannot be separated but are apparently transferable: features, which indicate [in the example of the car] speed and the pleasure of driving will continue to do so also when found in another object.

This example actualises the contradictory message coming across in the selections; it might be the object, but also the design, which is affectively sustainable. The difference might well lie in whether we are talking about a *reflective practice or a non-reflective reaction*. When the latter does not produce a *feel good* experience about a design, reflection starts and produces an object, which was suggested above. But there is also evidence that the unconscious works on different levels: objects, which are easily understood, are stored as designs or patterns, which means they get separated from the actual object. How much is stored and how elaborated the pattern becomes [how much design it comprises] is then a matter of experience at the individual level. With less experience the object does not get separated from the design: this does not make enough sense due to *no reflective practice* being involved at this level.

According to Wilson, the adaptive unconscious learns fast but unlearns slowly. To paraphrase: *It is here and now, no matter what might happen in the future*. Seemingly it takes less experience for it to learn than to unlearn. This matter allows for interesting assumptions: what is governed from this part of our mind is not sensitive to *time*. It learns quickly from repeated encounters, as we learned from Dewey, and is thus not easily influenced by passing experiences. A signal from the adaptive unconscious should thus be very reliable, as it is less biased by trends and *newness for the sake of newness* than the conscious. Learning from an *immediate, non-reflective reaction* about a design solution could thus

yield information, which is not too obscured by temporary or short-lived conditions.

### 3:2 Affective Sustainability formulated in text

As already noted in the introduction to section 3, the majority of respondents [7 out of 8] who completed the tasks in the workshop during the main investigation chose text number THREE. Two (2) of the four (4) respondents in the first test and two (2) out of five (5) in the second preferred this text as well.

One (1) of the respondents in the main investigation and one (1) in the first test decided to stay with text TWO.

Of the respondents in the first and second test, one (1) in each chose text ONE. This text also seemed to be the choice of those five (5) doing a complete navigation of the site without completing.

No respondent in either the main or test investigations chose text FOUR.

Two (2) of the respondents in the second test run formulated their own text and wanted it to over rule any given text.

In the following sections all the texts will be analysed one by one with regard to possible interpretations as exemplified by the accompanying selections.

Text THREE incorporated the four categories, which are vital to the concept of affective sustainability. This text was preferred by a plain majority of the participants 11 out of 17 if the test runs are included.

#### 3:2:1 TEXT THREE

*If the visitors to this exhibition are able to easily recollect which objects were on show, we have probably succeeded in identifying affective sustainability. But as long as we do not know why they are able to do this, we are still in the dark. The only way to know more is to analyse what made us choose these objects. To start with, we have throughout the selection process gone for the immediate, almost the objects that first entered our minds. It became apparent that they all had a certain aesthetic appeal, without necessarily being what we call beautiful. In the discussions that followed we had certain problems to pin down when some objects were originally designed. We also became aware of design elements and certain designs, which initially were perceived as new but through further examination turned out to be traditional in a certain sense: The idea behind the design seemed to stem from experiences, which dated from far back and obviously had been flowing with time.*

Objects with a generic expression dominated the selections accompanying this text, followed by objects inspired by 'human' modernism. Three of the participants choosing text THREE also wrote their own text:

- *'The objects in the exhibition were chosen based on the generic expression, which makes them an obvious and a anonymous part of our surrounding. Redesigns have been attempted throughout time, but the original versions are still widely used and unconsciously appreciated.'* (1)

To a selection of typically generic objects, this author added a crystal chandelier and a red glass bauble for a Christmas tree (fig.11 and 12). The latter is



a substitute for real apples in the tree, which was the original decoration. The first crystal chandelier must have been designed close to 150 years ago. Later day designers of lighting have worked with this material and attractive lamps have reached the market. [One of] the first versions made for candles is still reproduced and seen even in otherwise very contemporary and pared down settings.

- *'The items shown are objects whose design has changed very little during the technological revolution that we live in. They are examples that, for one reason or another, have lasted because of good design.'* (2)

The author of this text added things to his selection that did not appear either as an object or a type in any other selection: the commercial airliner and the electric guitar, both very consistent in their design despite enormous technical advances in the respective fields. The Technics record player from 1979 stands out in another selection accompanied by text THREE. It is still regarded as an up to date item [where record players today are in regular use like in discothèques] and with a design, which would probably fit most High Fidelity decks of much later design.



Figure 11.





Figure 12.

- *'Which of the objects I own, would I be most hesitant to throw away? Those that possess characteristics of times and people passed, like an old but beautiful sewing machine used in everyday life long ago or a once loved and cherished set of plates. They become beautiful partly due to the love and life collected in them. Those that are of obvious use to me in my everyday life. Those that collect the love and memory of my life. Those that have a character but are adaptable enough to follow me through the changes of my life.'* (3)

The selection belonging to this text was made up of objects, which each represented a different approach to affective sustainability [in the meaning of not wanting to throw away]: the personal/nostalgic, the object retaining its aesthetic value beyond its function, the generic, the generic/vernacular, and the modern. The notions of *adaptability* and *anonymity* are also part of the descriptions of the objects.

In the summarising comments of section 3:1, it was suggested that for those participants who actually fulfilled the tasks it was probably quite swift. The fact that the majority of these also choose text THREE, strengthens the plausibility of this assumption. The action-oriented implication in this text [quoting]; *'...we have throughout the selection process gone for the immediate, almost the objects that first entered our minds'*, would probably have made them refrain from choosing this text had they spent hours trying to construct images. The abundance of generic objects or objects with a generic expression in the selections, also coincides with the another suggestion in this text [quoting] *'... design elements and certain designs, which initially were perceived as new but through further examination turned out to be traditional in a certain sense: The idea behind the design seemed to stem from experiences, which dated from far back ...'*



### 3:2:2 FURTHER ANALYSIS: GENERIC AND NOSTALGIA

There is hence no apparent lack of concordance between the selected objects alternatively designs and the choice of text to accompany them. Neither does the complementary text written by one participant, oppose what is said in the chosen [given] text. The relation between fulfilling the tasks and choosing text THREE seems logical. However, there are two additional observations of interest. (i) The participants' inclusion of the terms *unconscious*, *adaptable* and *anonymous*. One interpretation, which is plausible, could be that they introduced these to explain, not least for themselves, a certain surprise concerning their choices. When they started to reflect over their selection, they may have realised that it did not include objects, which stood out or had very distinct characteristics. If they were to redo the exercise in a reflective manner they might have included other items, which, according to them, would have been more significant. Some participants in the second test raised in fact this consideration during the discussion, which took place after they submitted their results. (ii) Christmas decorations and an old sewing machine, which figured in some selections, were earlier (section 3:1:4) sorted into the file *personalised affective sustainability* or nostalgia. This classification might with hindsight be regarded as somewhat careless, taking into consideration the importance Heidegger (Ábalos, 2001) puts into the recognition of one's roots. In his critique of modernism he suggested a return to the origin of things as the logical starting point for, among other things, buildings. The question, according to him, was to know *why* to build in a certain way, not *how* (see further chapter III).<sup>125</sup> Items, which are on the verge of being personal memorabilia, might well serve as an essential starting point in the design process when aiming at affective sustainability due to them dealing with exactly this: *why rather than how*.

### 3:2:3 TEXT TWO

*The bibliographies over the designers represented in this exhibition do all state, almost without exception, that they were regarded as very avant-garde during either their entire career or part of it. What is it then that determines whether a designer will be confirmed, his designs becoming loved and used in a future, he or she perhaps didn't even live to see, whilst other designers are to become known just as avant-garde, their designs doomed to oblivion for all but perhaps a small group of 'those who know'?*

Only two participants were in favour of this text, which puts it on par with text ONE but with the difference that the latter was the only text appearing among those contributions to the workshop, which were not fully completed. The focus of this text is on the designer rather than the object. Consequently designers are more prominent in the selections accompanying this text; Jacobsen, Aalto, Morrison, Morris, Van Rohe, Sapper, but also a few of the most innovative automotive designs; Morris Minor (Mini), the Beetle, Vespa. The designers mentioned above do not all belong to the selection made for the application in section 2 of this chapter: *Who is in the Frame?* Neither does the accompanying analysis, *The Four Schools of Thought*, include avant-garde as a separate category. It is instead right to assume that each school has its own avant-garde: those who develop *new or*

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<sup>125</sup> Ábalos is here building on several works of Heidegger, but in particular "Bauen-Wohnen-Danken", 1952 and "Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?", 1977

*experimental concepts* but not necessarily take them on to realisation. Jacobsen and Aalto are both regarded as way before their time and occupy a place in the vicinity of the school *Un-restrained*, which is characterised here by *restless perception* and *stretching boundaries of material and technology*. Aspden (2006) says about their designs [including designs by Le Corbusier, Saarinen and Gray]: ‘They are timeless, or rather ahead of their time even when they are behind their time.’ Neither van der Rohe, nor Morrison, who are both placed in the *Rationalistic* school merit to be called avant-garde, at least not in the sense the term is used here. Morris, who belonged to the ‘Arts and Craft’-movement, should correctly not be named as such either.

The inclusion of the automotive designs is interesting in the respect of the avant-garde. They all are the first of their kind and introduced a new typology for human transportation, which has since developed into many different ‘smart’ and ‘compact’ vehicles that refer to these first examples rather than to what has come in between (Bayley, 1999). These early designs are seldom referred to as avant-garde though for reasons that we may only guess: automotive design is very technology driven and the industry forced to be very cost effective, which gives little room for designs, which are not applicable. Consequently designers in this industry are sometimes accused of being stylists: designing an appealing new chassis for old coachwork.

Both participants choosing text TWO also formulated their own text:

- ‘*This exhibition is of work by three designers active in different periods with the same common interest and understanding of both design and workmanship. The result is sensible products, easy to manufacture, easy to use in many situations, dealing with ‘eternal problems’, sitting, lighting ... that I believe could live forever.*’ (the selection included objects by Jacobsen, Aalto and Morrison) (1)

The formulations; ‘sensible products’, ‘easy to use’ both correspond well with the assumption made already in this work that *simplification is essential* while ‘eternal problem’ suggests what above has been called ‘objects with a generic expression’.

- (This text was written like a dialogue and is not quoted in full) ‘*If we analyse what it is about these objects ... we can see that their design is sustainable for various reasons: Beauty in detail ... nice shapes that are fun ... beautiful ‘simple’ objects ... lack of detail ... fun ... engaging, exiting ... works very well.*’ This participant included vehicles, some odd artefacts and also Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona chair and Sapper’s cafetière [as examples of ... *beautiful ‘simple’ objects ... lack of detail ...*] He concludes that these latter probably were the only objects in his selection fitting the ‘brief’. (2)

The concluding comment ‘fitting the brief’ is interesting. The on-line instruction to the workshop, appendix D, does not detail anything about the objects to choose other than the participant’s own judgment of ‘what has been around and will stay around’. All objects chosen by this participant ‘fitted this brief’. His selection appears thus to be partly un-reflected, partly reflected and furthermore, it reveals a certain ambivalence concerning the relation between affective sustainability and modernist design ideals: Are the latter resulting in affectively sustainable objects and thus designs in this spirit representing the correct items to include in the selection? . Also other comments by this participant reveal ambivalence: ‘is affective sustainability in fact equivalent to *retro*? Is it appropriate to include St Paul’s Cathedral in the selection?’ *These comments illustrate certain prejudice concerning affective sustainability: it is not to be combined with the new.*

He is, moreover, the only who uses the word *beauty* and *beautiful* when describing an object or introducing the exhibition. This is not sufficient for drawing any conclusions, although an interesting observation. Beauty and aesthetics are, as noted earlier, popularly used as synonyms

### 3:2:4 FURTHER ANALYSIS: RETRO AND NEW

A Glenn Johnson, director of design at a big industrial design studio underlines this dilemma well: ‘Everyone is eschewing architects for the same great new thing and yet the same people are idolizing Victorian-era solid property – to which they also aspire. This is hypocrisy.’ (2006). This statement is of course meant as a critique of [ in Johnson’s view] a cultural phenomenon, but is as such strengthening the arguments put forth here: that there is a difference in outcome when people are making respectively reflected and un-reflected choices concerning what they want to have and keep. It might be adequate to use the word hypocrisy but more appropriate to realise that people often say what they think is right and do what they feel is right (Wilson, 2004, Fulton Suri, 2005).<sup>126</sup>

The issue of *retro* is not only a predicament for the participant above, but also in a wider perspective, not least within automotive design, as already discussed earlier. Retro needs consequently to be deeper explored in the continued analysis of affective sustainability. When a phenomenon like retro takes the form of a widely used and popular term, it becomes value loaded, its original meaning easily obscured and its qualities as a communication tool as a result poor. Retro is today rather negatively loaded, not least when it comes to design, as something you turn to when you are short of new ideas and/or money to invest. Retrospective means *a look back*. Much like *tradition*, retro has become an opposition to new.

Two terms, which should indicate *use of experience*, have in fact come to signal lack of development. Rust (2006) and Curedale (2006), try to bring order into arguments on a discussion list by equating retro with (i) re-working but also with (ii) learning what made an object [a car] or a design [a car design] successful and normative at the time and to apply this knowledge rather than the old design. For those studying design in an evolutionary perspective, the truth lies somewhere in between, according to Yagou (2005). He argues for a re-evaluation of products in a historical perspective and do see design as something of a step-by-step process, where existing solutions are rethought, modified and adapted. This has

<sup>126</sup> This fact was also previewed as possible bias to the investigation, hence the emphasis on *immediacy* in the brief and of *doing* rather than *expressing*. Anyhow, the bias was confirmed by [at least] one participant, see section 3:2:3.

nothing to do with visual updating for commercial reasons, he claims. The step-by-step process is true development as compared to *dressing up* or *development for the sake of it*.

Referring to Pye, Yagou understands that 'the evolution of devices is as much a natural process as the evolution of organisms' (p. 55). None of these standpoints manifests that we should then look to learn from earlier successful models (as in the automotive design discussion) or from the artefacts and devices as suggested by the proponents of an evolutionary design theory. The idea to study 'memes', the signifiers of their times, is interesting but not obvious. These have to be correctly identified and understood to add usable information to the further adaptation of existing artefacts. Building on Dawkins, Silby and Langrish, Yagou concludes that if products of design might be viewed as a manifestation of ideas, they could be conceived as cultural 'memes'. These evolve in complex mental processes and the understanding of how they ought to be adapted to a changed human context is born out of this complexity. He is not explicit on how the designer should interact with the environment to achieve this information, which is crucial for the adaptation process.

Exploring affective sustainability means getting entangled in debates of the type exemplified above: new design urges innovation and development while retro design or traditional design keeps things at the status quo. Even if only one participant clearly gave a view on the dilemma 'feeling like selecting a retro design', analyses of other texts formulated by other participants show signs of the same predicament. This emphasises the importance of exploring all information in detail, which the workshop character of the investigation also allows. However, it is already at this stage fair to declare that design activities have become increasingly trans- and interdisciplinary. The constant widening of the circles around what is encompassed by design is in fact a far cry from the 'form follows function' formula, with its generalisations on the aesthetic and the elitist, all understanding role of the designer.

### 3:2:5 TEXT ONE

*The objects shown in this exhibition are all by designers who are either part of the modernist movement or conform to the ideas leading up to it. Alternatively they are highly influenced by it. This is not the result of a strategic selection but a natural one, following the theme. The absence of ornamentation is of course striking, as is the reduction of details to an absolute simplicity. The 'Form Follows Function' formula is said to mark the starting point of modernism. Louis Sullivan formulated it in 1896, but to use this expression to further underline the characteristics of affectively sustainable objects is to disregard the importance of aesthetics in all sensual matters.*

One (1) participant in the first and one (1) in the second test went for this option, as did the three (3) who only partly followed the exercise through. Five (5) of those who apparently navigated the site as a whole, which resulted in a mixture of real and 'faked' answers, also indicated a choice of this text, while two (2) indicated text FOUR. The information stemming from contributions, which were never submitted should from a methodological point of view be regarded as insignificant. Interestingly though, judging from the design of the site, a navigation to get to know it, would have indicated text FOUR, which was the last option and from which the participant then could choose to close the site or

navigate back to look more thoroughly at some of the other tasks. If you wanted to read all the texts once more, then, 'text 1' would of course have been the last one to be read and indicated. If you did not navigate the site but only read for example the introduction, text ONE would be indicated on the result screen as part of the actual layout of the site.

Only the selections by those three who partly completed [where 2 rather than 5 objects were named] their curator task were totally compatible with the accompanying text in the sense that they were examples of modernist or modernist inspired objects. The participant in the first test run included an oriental carpet in the selection, which does not immediately correspond to 'the absence of ornamentation', whilst other objects varied from '*simple*' personal items to the truly modernist inspired. 'The first of its kind' but in the meaning of 'the first that mattered' rather than 'the first ever' was more specifically the thread in the selection made by the participant from the second test run. This selection included the Tolomeo lamp. This is one of only three objects named more than once, all main investigation and tests included, and it is the most recent design, from 1987, of all selected. The lamp, which is known to be a big commercial success, combines the traditional lampshade form with the archetypical [the Anglepoise] adjustable arm. Despite these features it has never knowingly been called a retro design, which actualises the difference between when the design of an object *evolves* and when a design is being *revived*.

### 3:2:6 FURTHER ANALYSIS: IMMEDIATE IMAGES AND REACTION

The uncertainty concerning how to evaluate the choices made by those who without doubt interacted with the site when visiting, poses a dilemma. We might judge it unlikely that those 5 persons, out of the 7 who apparently thoroughly navigated the site, acted exactly the same way<sup>127</sup>. The dominating choice of text ONE points therefore in the direction of an established and therefore immediate correlation between modernism and the sustainable. As these visits did not result in any objects being named, the preference for text ONE might then have been the immediate reaction to the denomination affective sustainability rather than a more reflected choice of text based on a selection of objects. Some participants logging on to the site probably never intended to do the tasks on that occasion, while others might have planned to but were hindered by the absence of *immediate images*. As already discussed, this might have resulted in a void or even a blur and contributed to their decision to continue to the texts, which then stimulated an immediate reaction.

Independent of the interpretation of these results, there is a familiar, although criticised, tendency to make modernist design to a point of general reference for modern design. However, several of those designers, who are commonly referred to as modernists, are likely not to agree (see further section 2 of this chapter). Yagou (2005) is referring to Kubler when he argues that this generalisation is an oversimplification, which ignores the whole of human experience. The unrelenting discourse concerning Scandinavian design and its difficulties in distancing itself from the modernist heritage (the most fierce critique has come in Rampell, 2003)<sup>128</sup> is legendary [in Scandinavia at least].

<sup>127</sup> The test investigations and the working tests done by the web agency actually proves the contrary: each individual interacts differently with the site.

<sup>128</sup> This, in itself very criticised PhD thesis, is discussed in chapter III.

## 3:2:7 TEXT FOUR

*Classic and classical might be grossly overused notions in the world of design, architecture and decoration. Classicism or timeless orders, in the meaning of a certain way to do something, has never the less retained its significance. There is a quote of unknown origin, which states, "In the foreground of every revolution, invisible it seems to the academics, stands a perfect classical column." After having made my choice of objects for this exhibition, I reviewed it carefully and the 'classical column' came everywhere to life. This does not mean of course that the design of all the exhibited objects can be referred to the Golden Cut or follows the proportions, which made up the base for the classical architecture established by Palladio in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century. It rather means that there are elements in these designs, which can be traced back to classicism.*

Though several respondents used the word design classic and classical in their descriptions of objects, none chose the text referencing classicism: *'adherence to traditional standards (as of simplicity, restraint and proportion) that are universally and enduringly valid'*.<sup>129</sup>

## 3:2:8 OTHER TEXTS

Two participants from the second test asked for their choice of text to be ignored, though they knew that to choose a text was a compulsory task. They did not agree with any of the four given choices even if text ONE came most close. They proposed instead:

- *'This exhibition shows a number of design classics that are still contemporary even though most of them were designed 50-70 years ago. What makes them so popular year after year? Is it the level of innovation in terms of manufacture and function? Is it the chosen materials? Is it the actual form, minimalist and 'simple', but yet with a slight organic influence? Is it the designer's obvious care about the user's need and thus a combination of all factors above? Watch and make your own judgement.'* (1)

This participant's selection of objects is totally modernist influenced and function is emphasised in the description of each object.

- *'This selection of design classics would have looked just as fine in my grandparents' home as in mine. They will, I am sure, also be part of my grandchildren's life sometime in 40 years!'*<sup>130</sup> (2)

'The design classics' referred to by this participant are also mainly influenced by modernism but the objects are described with a lot more emphasis on aesthetics than function.

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<sup>129</sup> A second established meaning of classicism refers to the culture of ancient Greece and Rome. Classic has wider connotations and can be used to describe something, which is typical in the meaning of authentic or authoritative but also with historical associations or historically memorable. (Merriam-Webster, 2006)

<sup>130</sup> Translated from Swedish.



### 3:2:9 FURTHER ANALYSIS: INFLUENCING OR EXPRESSING SUSTAINABILITY

Do the freestanding texts in section 3:2:8 above pose more questions than answers? They represent two, in a way totally, different approaches to affective sustainability, where the first seem to suggest a kind of optimising of parameters and the second an emotional judgement. More importantly and contrary to the individual texts cited earlier, they indicate undoubtedly that *affective* can be interpreted in two slightly different ways. According to the first text: designers *influencing sustainability*: ‘*the designers’ obvious care about the users’ need*’, which means, you want the object to sustain as you feel that it takes care of you. According to the second text: objects *expressing sustainability*: ‘*would have looked just as fine in my grandparents home ...mine ... be part of my grandchildren’s life*’, which means, you want the object to sustain as it makes you feel good.

#### SUMMARISING COMMENTS

It is of course encouraging that text THREE, which is supporting the four (4) conceptual statements, is also preferred by a majority. These categories correspond and form the core of the statements suggesting how designers might be informed of the concept of affective sustainability (chapter IV). However, the other texts, given or individually formulated, are not to be overlooked or ignored. They are all chosen or written in an effort to express “*a visual thought*”<sup>131</sup> and are important instruments when refining the statements and as follows the overall concept.

The notion of ‘visual thought’ gives rise to connotations of interest to this summary. Initially it makes us recall the discussion (section 3:3 of this chapter) concerning how emotions are expressed: bodily or with language. Current findings within neuroscience emphasises the role of the body, while the issue of expressive language goes back to, among others, Wittgenstein. The French architects de Portzamparc and Sollers have in a dialogue called ‘Voir Ecrire’<sup>132</sup> posed the question whether architecture, like painting and sculpture, is ruled by thoughts, which cannot be expressed in words. Sollers argues for the opposite: “*the more I write, the more I see.*” De Portzamparc (2006) continues: ‘Is there then something like a visual thought? Yes he says, but if it cannot be spoken it does not exist. ....our sensorial capacity, when transmitted to consciousness, does not develop by itself, it develops when the phenomena, the observations are in one particular moment expressed in words or sketched and memorised.’(p. 18). In his inaugural speech to Collège de France in 2006, he goes on to propose that everything we have gained through the imagery, which is part of our modern information/communication society might be lost if we forget the words as these help us to see.

This very interesting discourse initiates thoughts on the importance of the text part of the workshop. It is too late to ask the participants more questions but it would have been of major interest to know how many of them started doing the tasks by choosing a text and then went on to select the objects; likewise if those who managed to complete the tasks started with the text. As these questions cannot be answered it is sufficient here to emphasise the importance of *immediate*

<sup>131</sup> In French: *Pensée visuelle*

<sup>132</sup> In English: *See Write*

*images* as a way to activate what is stored in the unconscious. A text might serve as an image.

*Retro* and *nostalgia* could easily be dismissed as biasing the concept of affective sustainability. However, learning from the workshop and the subsequent analyses, these phenomena might instead be instrumental in creating images, which inform affective sustainability.

### 3:3 Is affective sustainability transcending cultural borders?

The participants in the main investigation and the tests represent all together eight (8) countries, the three partially completed exercises included; Denmark, Sweden, the UK, Portugal, the USA, Brazil, Estonia and France. Scandinavians numbered 11 participants, the others 9. Ages varied from 23 to 44 years. Among those only visiting the site, the Swedes were in an overwhelming majority, 13 of 22, which corresponds well with the fact that the 11 follow-up questionnaires, of which eight (8) came from the observation group, were all sent in by Swedes. The Swedish dominance here comes as no surprise as the observation group came from a Swedish university and comprised 80 students. However, this does not mean that everyone in the group is of this nationality. The visit-only group adds two more nationalities to the total group, Irish and Belgian.

*There is no evident cultural tendency to be found in either the selections or the choice of texts.* With the exception of two (2), the Scandinavians all chose at least one object by Jacobsen, Aalto or one of their Scandinavian contemporaries and soul mates. This fact informs us rather about their experiences [following the arguments that these are crucial for all immediate reactions] than of any real convergence due to cultural background. These designers figured with their work also in several other selections, a Portuguese participant probably being the furthest away from the Scandinavians

*Neither is there any evidence of affective sustainability being interpreted differently by any one participant in a way that might be traced specifically to cultural belonging.* It is important to note though, that the background information asked for 'nationality', not 'cultural background', which has become quite common in investigations. More generally speaking than referring to any specific research, there are suspicions that cultural belonging, when differing from nationality, is often closer to an emotional than a factual commitment. The person's way of thinking and living is thus not totally compatible with his or hers emotions. This is supported by the observations made by Wilson (2004) concerning conscious commitment and unconscious behaviour.

To be judged by their selections, all participants appeared to be under major influence of western culture. It would have been of great interest to see representatives of Asian, Arabian or African cultures taking part. With no doubt they would have fulfilled the tasks in a different way as their philosophy, not least what concerns i.e. time, traditions, nature, life and death, is different from the western. However, limitations in the scope of this work make it impossible to pursue this line of inquiry. Furthermore, youths with a different cultural background are found to adjust well to the culture in which they live even if they endorse their original culture in the circle of their family (Phinney, 2006).

### 3:4 Summary

A formulation by one participant serves well as an introduction to this concluding section: ‘a ... design, which in itself concretised changing times to the extent that it immediately moved on to another time.’<sup>133</sup> The conclusion regards the results of the investigation including the subsequent analyses these results have initiated.

The quoted participant is referring to the Egg chair designed by Arne Jacobsen in the 1950s. She does not move back fifty or more years when the image is projected in her mind but moves on in time. Whether it is *the design or the object*, which is affectively sustainable, is almost impossible to judge. A fair assumption would be that it depending on experience could be either, which would also indicate what is relevant for the person making the judgement.

On the basis of how the participants complied with the curatorial task it is possible to judge in favour of affective sustainability being a *lived experience*. These experiences are stored in the unconscious, where they are difficult to access by reflection, and are instead initiated by stimuli and result, through a *feel good* sensation, in certain immediate reactions. The online presentation of the exhibition contained very little, which could act as stimuli a part from the general description and the pre-formulated text blocks. These appeared moreover in wrong sequence for them to naturally act as stimuli for the actual selection of objects.

All but one of the participants completing the tasks chose the text, which was meant to conceptualise affective sustainability. This fact provides two important indications:

1. Text creates images or *visualises thoughts*, which might act as stimuli for the recollection of lived experience.
2. The conceptualisations [which here are the four (4) texts] might have consequently acted as stimuli for the selections or alternatively as a confirmation of selections already made. The base for the stimuli as well as the confirmation would have been *affective experiences*, factual as well as emotional.

Participants who had not completed or only partially completed the tasks admitted in dialogue that given a second chance, they would have made a different selection. This indicates that affective sustainability in their case took the form of a *learned experience*, which does not get confirmed through gut feeling or a feel-good sensation. The respondent is instead searching for confirmation in his or her social or cultural environment.

The outcome further suggests that the concept of affective sustainability is mainly applicable to *typified designs* even if frequently *manifested in particular objects*. A typified design appears to retain its significance even if constantly evolving in the shape of objects. The continued analyses in this section resulted in several examples of when and how this is achieved:

- When improvement or adaptation is initiated by *need* and/or informed by earlier adaptations
- As above by *combining* design solutions from two or more typified objects. These as well as the resulting particular object retain their significance.

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<sup>133</sup> The text is translated from Swedish.

- By addressing *eternal problems* or problems evolving from these. This is not valid for problems, which are misjudged as having evolved when they in reality are created and temporal.
- By addressing a problem as *the first of its kind* when the original problem has evolved to the extent that it is hardly recognisable.
- By simplifying not only the actual use but also the *immediate understanding* of the use.
- When simplifying still includes *conspicuous features* and does not result in anonymity.
- When the typified object is based on an *adaptable and flexible technology*.

#### 4. Exploring the commercial reality: interviewing

Are we influenced to regard an object as classic or timeless? This would mean that we as a result of information and conscious experience make reflected decisions on this matter.

Can we imbue an object with the quality of affective sustainability?

These two questions were raised already in the introduction (chapter I), where it was also pointed out that a timeless or a classic object is transcendent and beyond the contemporary but not by definition affectively sustainable. These two questions consequently concern different matters. What is the reason for actualising them here? This section reports, discusses and summarises three interviews with decision-makers from the home furnishing industry, where the timeless and the classic are very established notions from a commercial standpoint and often used in communication with customers and employers the like. Regular contacts with museum curators and auction house specialists<sup>134</sup> over the course of this research have added information on these institutions' potential influence on an object's status but also on how they, in turn, are influenced by what happens in the commercial world. One way to explain this progress is that an object enters a circuit, which involves producers, retailers, exhibitions, magazines, auctions and museums. Objects found on this circuit often belong to one or more of the four categories below and are likely to be called timeless or a classic (Norman & Ernstell, 2006):

1. Manifested a new form language, which have since seen many followers: innovative.
2. Introduced a new way of thinking (immaterial), which has later been developed by others: icon.
3. Regarded as very representative for its time: classified<sup>135</sup>.
4. Having art qualities: applied art.

Which role does the consumer have when it comes to introducing an object into this circuit? There is no obvious answer to this question. We learn about

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<sup>134</sup> Gareth Williams, V&A, London, Bitte Nygren, Museum of Architecture, Stockholm, Jan Norman, Micael Ernstell, The Swedish Museum of Fine Art, Stockholm, Helena Smedberg, Eva Seeman, Bukowskis Auctions, Stockholm.

<sup>135</sup> This suggestion might be regarded as a contradiction: an object, which is clearly linked to a *time* cannot be timeless. But according to Norman & Ernstell this is where the difference between a timeless object and a classic object becomes evident: An object of category 3 is a classic.

objects, which we encounter repeatedly and if the context is trustworthy we also believe what we are told: this object is timeless. Someone may surely protest and insist they do not like it anyway. They would neither acquire it, nor miss it. When an object gives rise to these reactions, it will not be affectively sustainable, at least not for the moment and for the person reacting this way. Alternatively, the opposite scenario occurs: someone experiences an object as something they want to have and keep, but are told by critics that this object does not have timeless qualities. Depending on who the critic is, the person judging might change his or her mind about the object.

Curators and specialist admit that they have a role in the creation of the classic or the timeless object: when an object is added to a collection or it starts to appear in sales catalogues, the chance of it becoming timeless rises considerably. Exceptions are usually of two kinds: a number of inclusions based on the popularity or the *hype* of some objects at a certain time are with hindsight difficult to defend or understand, whilst at the same time there are certain inclusions, which ought to have been made but never were. There are also examples of objects, which never made it to the circuit but became a commercial success in their own right, to the surprise of retailers and specialists alike. When specialist finally became aware of their existence these objects were already appropriate for collections, one good example being the 'Hardoy-chair', later [in the 1950s] also called the 'Sling-chair' (Woodham, 2000, Marcus, 1998).<sup>136</sup>

Producers and retailers have a very active role in putting objects on the before mentioned circuit but they have different agendas than museums and auction houses. An object may be attractive or sought after from a private or public collection point of view but not necessarily contribute to profit. It is at its best an important showcase and commerce can only afford a few of these. This should mean that among the objects on the circuit, some are to retain their status as *(i) timeless or classic objects only* whilst others will prove to be *(ii) also affectively sustainable*. A few will lose their status altogether and disappear into oblivion. Others will become *(iii) icons only or also icons*. These serve as images, emblems and symbols (Merriam-Webster, 2006). All combinations seem to be possible but no one status is a prerequisite for the other. Indications in this research so far suggest that *affective sustainability* is the only object quality among those listed above, which we cannot learn, which is a lived experience, independent of who is the arbiter.

The interviews referred to and analysed here are the last of three applications in search of the relevance of affective sustainability.

#### **4:1. Three interviews: How is it possible to recognise immaterial qualities in material objects?**

The three companies chosen for the interviews all have diverse business ideas, but an important commonality in their strategy for success: employing designers is a way to address both the material and immaterial quality of objects. In addition they have also voiced their main ambitions and, through action, demonstrated how to succeed long-term: by being consistent. Though focusing on furniture, Isokon Plus as well as Källemo has a strategy which does not rule out

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<sup>136</sup> In Sweden this chair has always popularly been called the 'Bat-chair'.

production of other home-ware, which for Ikea is an important production and sales category.

- IKEA<sup>137</sup>, a big multinational producing home-ware for the mass-market, was founded in the 1950s with the initial idea of providing good quality products at very low prices with the help of self-assembly. There is a strong sense of branding also on the product level, with individual, popular names given to each product. Their ambivalence whether they are a company giving design directions [special ranges] or merely following directions is well known. The latter has the strongest hold (Lebas, 2006, Torekull, 2006). They employ as well as commission designers and work roughly under the umbrella 'Scandinavian Modern'<sup>138</sup>. Product concepts, rather than ideas, have core business value as they can be continuously developed. They are also essential for branding. Many of their products are popularly said to wear out more rapidly by use than by the eye.
- ISOKON PLUS<sup>139</sup>, a small private British company producing and selling furniture to the top end of the retail and contract market. An entrepreneur who believed strongly in modernism, including the social responsibility, which initially was part of it, founded the company in the 1930s. They manufacture furniture in their own workshop in London and will continue to export rather than establish themselves in other countries. Their designs originate from the 1930s onwards. The first are still an important part of their trademark as is the since favoured material, plywood, but also their contemporary designs show a strong visual adherence to modernism. Their only retail outlet is in London, where they also sell furniture and appliances from other suppliers, mainly by designers following modernist ideas.
- KÄLLEMO<sup>140</sup>, a small private Swedish company producing and selling furniture aimed at the same target groups as Isokon Plus. An entrepreneur, who strongly believes that immaterial qualities are important for everyday objects, founded it in the late 1970s. Moreover, he sees artistic talent as crucial for success in architecture and design professions. Källemo has a significant reputation in Sweden and abroad as *the company* bringing Scandinavian design on from modernism and making it possible for new designers to have their works produced. They focus on realising contemporary furniture designs but their range also includes designs from the 1930s.

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<sup>137</sup> The basic information about IKEA referred here is cited from: Timeline.

<[www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_GB/about\\_ikea/timeline](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_GB/about_ikea/timeline)>

<sup>138</sup> 'Scandinavian Modern' is well described in Englund & Schmidt, 2003)

<sup>139</sup> The basic information about Isokon Plus, referred here, is cited from the company's own promotional material, including <[www.isokonplus.com](http://www.isokonplus.com)>

<sup>140</sup> The basic information about Källemo, referred here, is cited from <[www.kallemo.se](http://www.kallemo.se)>



## 4:1:1 IKEA –

‘He scraped and saved in every possible way – except on ideas and quality. This is how today’s IKEA Concept began.’<sup>141</sup>

The IKEA catalogue is to be compared to the Shell logotype; it changes without anyone really noticing it and only enough to feel relevant: it is ‘now’. The oldest design in their current range dates from 1958, a storage series called, TORE, initially aimed at children. In 1996 they agreed with the Swedish National Museum of Fine Art to re-edition chairs from the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>142</sup>. Several products designed in the 1960s and 1970s are still popular and two of Ikea’s bestsellers; LACK (table) and KLIPPAN (sofa) were designed more than 25 years ago. Understanding Ingvar Kamprad (Torekull, 1998/2006) these products are among the IKEA icons. Not because they are bestsellers, but due to their importance for the company image: ‘wishful living at wishful prices’, ‘Önskebo till Önskepris’, a slogan which opened the first Stockholm retail outlet in the early 1950s and had the by-line, ‘Smålandsmöbler’, ‘furniture from Småland’.

**2002**

IKEA dares to be different - again. With its cutting edge design it has even transformed an historic Swedish souvenir into a cool, contemporary design object.

Figure 13.<sup>143</sup>

This Swedish region had already then established a reputation for providing normal Swedish homes with honest furniture, products without fuss that you could trust. The examples of these, which are still in production, are IKEA icons, bestsellers or not. Kamprad admits in a foreword to the book built on interviews with him (Torekull, 2006) that he is not completely happy to discuss these things and has never done it before. This explains why the issue of icon products never develops in the interview referred to below.

Lars Engman, who was interviewed, is global design manager at IKEA.<sup>144</sup>

*The design process at IKEA includes the normal phases: from idea through concept to decision. Through these phases run three vital ingredients: the*

<sup>141</sup> The IKEA Concept. |<<http://franchisor.ikea.com/show>>

<sup>142</sup> They stopped manufacturing this series again due to contractual issues.

<sup>143</sup> See footnote 137.

<sup>144</sup> For the structure of the interview, see Appendix C.

polarised struggle to keep or change, the emphasis on experience and the recognition of the 'feel good' factor.

Everyone involved knows that an IKEA product must be affordable. This awareness tends to limit the scope of analysis and discussion more than perhaps is necessary. Product performance is primarily judged by earnings, except where certain icon products are concerned. This focus on figures has an impact also on the attitude to change. It may at least short term seem better economically to stay with the 'old'. He admits that there probably is a lot to be gained from studying selected products more closely and making a refined analysis of the data: Why has a product become an icon, sometimes even a best-selling icon? Icons are today mainly regarded as important for marketing purposes. If a product turns in to a bestseller it is explained in terms of it being very basic: everyone needs it.

The issue of 'keep or change' in combination with pragmatism [as a business idea] have become a constraint in the design process. Emphasis on experience and the 'feel good' factor on the other hand, is expanding it. Experience is, in reality, of two kinds within IKEA: internal; which is a lot about figures and external; where designers are encouraged to look into design history and to match the past with 'now' as an instrument to avoid getting hooked on too many trends. Engman thinks it is important for designers to recognise the feel-good factor by recalling their uncontrolled reactions, like tears and sensations of fulfilment, when hearing music, seeing art, watching nature or a natural setting. If a designer and/or a client experience these feelings of happiness and satisfaction when faced with a design, they should know that this is a successful concretisation of an idea.

Discussions on sustainability within IKEA have always centred on physical characteristics to his knowledge. The denomination 'affective sustainability' seems rather academic. The issue without doubt raises questions of vital importance to product strategy and design: Why many products fail for reasons that totally escape logic, is only one.

#### 4:1:2 ISOKON PLUS –

'Isokon's designs of the 1930s have endured as among the most important of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The new designs sold by Isokon plus will become the classics of the next century.'<sup>145</sup>

Following the advice of Walter Gropius, Isokon hired Marcel Breuer almost from the start. The company still manufactures several of Breuer's designs like the 2 and 3-seater sofa from 1936.

Chris McCourt, who was interviewed, is the current owner and managing director of Isokon Plus.<sup>146</sup>

There is more behind the enduring relevance of the designs from the 1930s than the actual rationale of modernism. Foremost, objects from this period are among the first not to be visually demanding.<sup>147</sup> This might be explained in mathematical terms but the balance and the gravity present in many designs from this period are more likely to carry significance. Breuer is fascinating as a designer in many respects. He had a seemingly unconscious understanding of

<sup>145</sup> <www.isokonplus.com>

<sup>146</sup> For the structure of the interview, see Appendix D.

<sup>147</sup> McCourt was anxious to emphasis that 'visually demanding' is not equal to 'simple'.



structure and an ability to appreciate its impact on manufacture without mathematical calculation.

McNaught is also intrigued by the obsessive nature of other designers he has worked and still is working with. They can go to great length to realise their ideas but still give room for objectification, distancing the object from its immediate context. He is convinced that to keep this distance at some point in the design process is crucial on the way to arriving at these enduring designs. Almost as important is to look back. Without this objectification and looking back, there is a significant risk of the designer losing his sense of proportion: looking at what he is about to achieve as i.e. very important, totally new and relevant when in fact it is not!

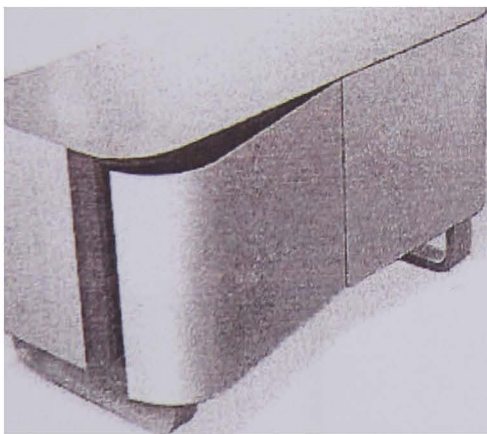
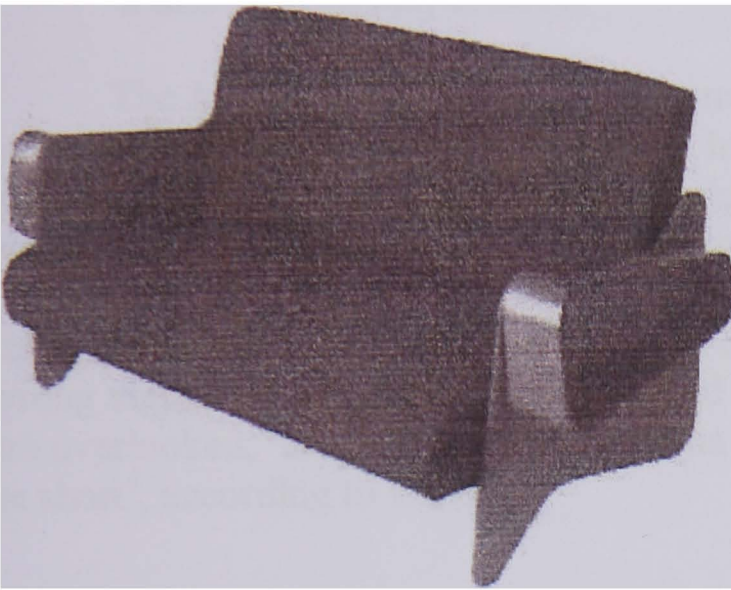


Figure 14. Top. 2-seater sofa, Marcel Breuer, 1936  
Bottom. Wing, Michael Sodeau, 1999

When judging which designs to incorporate in the Isokon Plus range, intuitive feeling is prime, he admits. Without immediate attraction to the object it is difficult to proceed. Secondly comes function. This must be immediately apparent on viewing and not obscured by irrelevant forms.

Isokon Plus is not a mainstream shop or distributor. He argues that this position is not one of conviction, but due to classic or timeless objects not always attracting a wider consumer group, at least not immediately. There seems to be something elitist in these objects. This risks appropriating affective sustainability,



*which to be relevant cannot be confined to something elitist. The views and visions shared by people, who have experiences from a more knowledgeable design context have not percolated through. This is perhaps why there has never really been an incentive to keep the selling price down. He concludes that there apparently is a gap between timelessness and affective sustainability. It will take a deeper understanding of attraction to close this gap. Attraction is probably facilitated by recognition of features, which might go missing with the aim of making an object less visually demanding. This balance is not easy. Ikea seems to have managed to do so. They appeal to a wide variety of people, including people who also shop here at Isokon.*

4:1:3 KÄLLEMO –  
‘It shall stand the wear of the eye’<sup>148</sup>

The founder of Källemo, Sven Lundh, challenged Svenska Möbelinstitutet (in translation: The Swedish Furniture Institute) in the early 1980s when the institute officially stated that quality could be measured in tests<sup>149</sup>. These ought consequently to be compulsory for all furniture claiming quality. Results were to be put on a label to go with the object. The reason for Lundh’s challenge was a strong belief that assessing quality only on material criteria would send totally wrong signals to designers, producers and consumers. When immaterial qualities are overlooked, ‘the time it will take for an object to reach the waste container will be short’, according to Lundh.

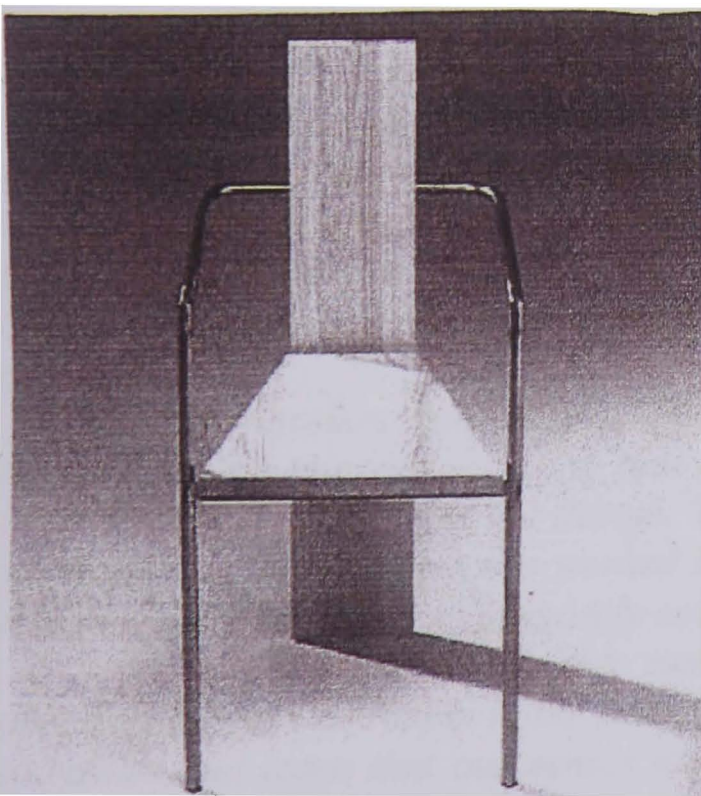


Figure 15. Chair ‘Concrete’ by Jonas Bohlin, 1980



Figure 16. Stool, Asplund, about 1930.

<sup>148</sup> [www.kallemo.se](http://www.kallemo.se)

<sup>149</sup> See further chapter III, section 2:1.

A wider public learned to know Källemo through media attention following the introduction of the 'Concrete chair' by Jonas Bohlin.<sup>150</sup> This chair was designed as a statement challenging the established views on function, comfort and choice of material. The chair is today an icon and contributed to the closure of the test institute, referred to above, as none of Concrete's characteristics complied with the standards set up by them, but was still judged as a high quality chair by self-appointed jurors. An era had come to an end but another was about to start: Swedish design after modernism.

Källemo manufactures in local and regional workshops and distributes internationally. The famous architect Gunnar Asplund's stool from about 1930 is one of the earliest designs in their range.

Sven Lundh, founder and owner of Källemo, has been interviewed<sup>151</sup>.

*Even if Källemo's current range is in no way a tribute to modernism, he is very clear when it comes to its importance for modern design. It was during modernism that the artist, the architect and the designers became one and the immaterial qualities of artefacts thus became recognised. The liberal arts have therefore always been a source of inspiration and knowledge for him.*

*Easing the visual expression was part of the ideas behind functionality and rationality but this has not always been understood to its full potential. Focus has remained on functionality as determining form and on rationality as a mean to allow for industrial manufacture. One of the most important legacies from modernism is, in effect, to create understanding through visual expression.*

*The lack of a deeper recognition and comprehension of modernism is responsible for taking rationalism to an extreme and ending in an impoverishment of immaterial quality. Necessary adjustments are ongoing and we are now about to recall and learn about the positive sides of modernism.*

*He makes comparisons between collecting art and judging design: If art is bought primarily with economic gain in mind, you end up with things you don't want to display. Using the same criterion for design might bring you a fast profit but neither long-term success nor financial gain or satisfaction. Intuitive feeling is crucial, but it is only to be trusted when you have gained a fair amount of experience.*

*He emphasises that intuitive feeling also concerns the designer, not only the design. The impression of the first must coincide with the expression of the latter for him to believe in the design. This honesty and serenity is some kind of warranty that the designer has worked in accordance with belief and not tried to design something, which is purposely constructed to look 'right' or different.*

*He concludes that 'affective sustainability' is an accurate denomination; objects, which do not apply to the senses, never last very long. It is also important to realise and learn that our senses develop only as a result of experience. You come to appreciate objects produced by Källemo as part of your personal development.*<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Källemo is today producing the chair in ash (nature or choice of colour), which was an early alternative to concrete.

<sup>151</sup> For the structure of the interview, see Appendix D.

<sup>152</sup> Sven Lundh chose to answer in writing but with respect to the structure of the interview. The transcript is original and thus in Swedish. Appendix E.

## 4:2 Summary

The following two questions opened this section:

1. Is the classic or the timeless object *imposed* on us by factors in our economic, social and cultural environment?
2. Can we *imbue* an object with the quality affective sustainability?

The three interviews have provided vital information, although not giving direct answers to the questions, which structured the interviews.<sup>153</sup> This was not the intention either. The data provided is of type dB: *the process in the mind of the beholder in which an object becomes affectively sustainable*.

- The denominations timeless, classic and icon are used also when the equivalent of affective sustainability is addressed.
- Issues falling within the concept of affective sustainability are of growing concern. The importance of an object's more immaterial qualities is being emphasised.
- Intuitive feeling and the feel-good factor are guides to designs, which hold immaterial qualities.

There are in addition two important keywords to extract from the interviews: *experience* and what could be called, **visual simplification**.

Two dimensions of *experience* are brought into perspective. Actively going for additional experience is not only a means to learn (reflected) but also to develop the senses (un-reflected) and be able to better trust intuitive feeling. This emphasises the relevance of the mundane description of experience: it is always useful.

Intuitive feeling guides the producer [or the designers' client] when judging which designs have the potential to secure both reputation and profit long term. The originality of the object as expressed by the designer's involvement and attachment seems to be just as important as the design itself. These expressions must result from the designer's own intuitive feeling or inner belief and be incorporated in the actual design.

McNaught and Lundh use similar formulations to explain why modernism may have been and might still be, regarded as the rationale for timelessness: "objects which are not visually demanding", "objects which ease the visual expression". Engman does not comment on modernism but every Ikeas store is a showcase of objects, which are not *visually demanding*, which as such is remarkable considering its size and mass-market appeal.

Källemo and Isokon Plus are aware of their slightly elitist appeal. The analysis of their arguments can be summarised as follows: as a company you must decide on which level of experience your average customer has. It is difficult to cater for everybody. On the other hand, you have to account for growing

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<sup>153</sup> Appendixes C and D



experience when judging design otherwise the consumer will grow out of the objects too quickly and dispose of them. And then we have not achieved what we aimed at.

An evident conclusion of these interviews is that affective sustainability is also very relevant commercially. However, it needs to be made explicit to become something more than yet another academic notion. Nevertheless, the information gained through the interviews largely supports the four (4) conceptual statements and shows directions in which these need to be *expanded* to function as parameters:

*Design with regard to **traditions** promotes recognition of objects and does not impede development.*

***The aesthetic** is linked to how visually demanding an object is.*

***Perceiving an object** gives rise to an intuitive feeling, which is produced through experience.*

## ***Bridge to part four:***

### ***A well-founded concept***

To make the most of the concluding part [four] of this work, there is reason to recapitulate part two; *The Timeless*, and part three; *The Affectively sustainable*.

In part two, chapter III described the deconstruction of the timeless and timelessness from three perspectives: physical, philosophical and affective. When viewed from these three perspectives it became evident that the timeless has three dimensions: the material, the cognitive and the cultural. Furthermore, each of these dimensions comprises one or several conceptions or notions, which also have to be analysed from the three perspectives mentioned above. The analyses, which constitute the deconstruction, have thus been very complex. By creating closures, making a short summary of the analysis of each conception before continuing, it has been possible to let primarily *the essence of an analysis* influence the subsequent analysis. Referring to the cognitive theories discussed in this work, repeated encounters with concordant indications and facts, even if from different perspectives, allows for also unconscious recalling of significant details, and for blocking less relevant information out, as the significant knowledge is what Wilson calls 'energised': it is easily accessible as it is highly relevant in the actual situation.

Chapter IV summarised the essence of the analyses into factual essentials in relation to each of the conceptions. Three main components could be extracted from these summaries: A: The interaction between human ways of being and human ways of living, B: The distinction between lived and learned experience, C: The recognition that objects in varying degrees have immanent affective competence. The factual essentials and their main components form the base for *the grounded theory*:

*The phenomenon of timelessness is a lived experience and consequently works on the affective level and is significant for human ways of being: These are not changing but adapting and adjusting to a changing human context resulting in altered ways of living.*

*To be sustainable, an object or artefact referred to as timeless must therefore have an affective competence: The ability to address human ways of being notwithstanding their constant adaptation.*

To enable the three different applications in chapter V, the grounded theory was divided into four (4) conceptual categories based on *time, traditions, aesthetics and perception*, each constituting the core of a conceptual statement:

1. *Time is a process rather than defined eras.* Ancient, modern and new is signifies relevance rather than time. Now is likewise regarded as a mediator between past and future.
2. *Traditions are experiences and not orders or truths.* Traditions are viewed as more dynamic than static.

3. *Aesthetic and Beauty are not one.* There is a difference between an immediate and a mediated sensual experience, as well as little and much cultural influence.
4. *Intuition is the result of experience and contains valuable information.* Direct (un-reflected) perception results in ideas and behaviour to be considered in reflected decisions and solutions.

These statements served as search tools in the applications and enabled a continued systematic exploring of timelessness but also prompted a change in approach: the implicit phenomenon has due to the progress of the research become more explicit and conceptualised: *affective sustainability*.

Part three comprises three applications. With the help of the conceptual categories and statements above, two types of data [dA and dB] have been possible to retrieve from the applications in chapter V:

dA. The design processes as designerly ways of reasoning and thinking to aim at affective sustainability.

dB. The process in the mind of the beholder in which an object becomes affectively sustainable.

Data dA has been provided by the application: Four Schools of Thought and subsequent analysis. The most important indications are: designers', who have timeless objects ascribed to them.

- Do *not focus* on any appreciation of *time* in their work.
- *Emphasises aesthetics* but are ambiguous in their relation to beauty as well as to the relation between beauty and the aesthetic.
- Have a pragmatic attitude to traditions, which might be called *useful disrespect*.
- Develop their intuitive ideas, *the immediately perceived*, without much constraint and returns to them throughout the design process. Support for these ideas is often looked for by exploring their own needs and roots.

Data dB has been provided by one investigation and a series of three interviews. The most important indications are: judgements concerning affective sustainability are relying on

- *Intuitive feeling.* To name an affectively sustainable object, we need a stimulus rather than reflection: the information has to be 'energised'. [*un-reflected behaviour*]
- An appreciation of *time* and the object not being in concordance.
- Simplification. Immediate understanding of purpose [rather than use] including need and differentiation [from other objects with presumably the same purpose]. [*perception and aesthetics*]
- The object's ability to raise a sensual experience: how it would feel to 'dwell' (Bastick) with this object. [*aesthetics*]
- Positive recognition, which also includes *traditions* as well as nostalgia.

Through the continued analyses we have learnt that intuitive feeling often is correct but may be distorted by interaction between perception and the

emotional set [which includes an affective but also a motor and a cognitive component] as well as by empathy, lack of sensitivity and incomplete experience (Bastick).

The analyses have furthermore pointed at two possible methods to judge the correctness of our intuitive feeling without risk of distortion: the visualisation of thoughts [not to confuse with ideas] and the study of ‘thoughtless acts’ performed by ordinary people in our environment.

When summarising, a complementary line of inquiry has been actualised: as recognition is important for affective sustainability and the notion of the aesthetic has expanded to comprise ‘that an object should look its function’ (see chapter V, section 3:1:2) the issue of immanent and transcendent products or product characteristics is of interest for the conceptualisation of affective sustainability and will be addressed in the next chapter, VI.

## **Part four: Conclusions**

## Chapter VI. Grounding.<sup>154</sup>

### 1. Indications

The bridge to this concluding chapter has recapitulated and summarised the exercises, which have applied affective sustainability conceptually to designers' thinking and to design objects. These exercises have been carried out by three different methods with the aim to research the relevance of the grounded theory. This was formulated as part of the reconstruction of *the timeless*, chapter IV, and did initially theorise this phenomenon. As a consequence of the conceptualisation of timelessness, based on the deconstruction and analyses in chapter III, the theory was re-formulated:

*Affective sustainability is a lived experience and consequently working on the unconscious level and is significant for human ways of being: These do not change but adapt and adjust to a changing human context resulting in altered ways of living.*

*To sustain, an object or artefact must therefore also have an affective competence: the ability to address human ways of being not withstanding their constant adaptation.*

As argued in chapter IV, the focus of this theory is more on the affectively sustainable artefact and less on its creation. This fact does not constitute a bias but is, as pointed out earlier, part of the purpose: for a designer to create the affectively sustainable, awareness of the process in the mind of the beholder in which an object becomes affectively sustainable (data dA), is a precondition. An important aim of the applied exercises has therefore been to expand focus to encompass how affective sustainability might be achieved by design (data dB). The three main elements in the theory: *lived experience, human ways of being and affective competence* have thus to be analysed from the perspective of the beholder as well as from the designer, to establish what the information resulting from the applied exercises is indicating.

To extract accurate indications from the extensive amount of information, which has been achieved through analyses and applied exercises, is precarious. The indications will thus be the result of funnelling and they will refer either directly to the grounded theory above or to the conceptual categories and the conceptual statements derived from this theory for research purposes: making it possible to carry out the applied exercises. Indications are never proofs even if they are well founded by research. The assertions forming the basis of the indications presented in the following sections, are all substantiated by the research carried out in this work, hence the heading of this chapter: *grounding*. Some key references will be cited, as will references to the applied exercises: the investigation: *an online exhibition*, the graphic model and analysis: *four schools of thought* and the three interviews: *the commercial reality*.

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<sup>154</sup> Citing in this chapter is mainly to key sources. Complete citing is to be found in the analyses and summaries of chapter III.



## 1:1 Indications with reference to the grounded theory

A *lived experience* informs intuition and is formed unconsciously. Designers aiming at affective sustainability in their design must therefore know, not only which categories define this experience but also their properties. For the sake of a coherent research terminology, these are called conceptual categories and conceptual statements respectively. A complication interfering with this knowledge is designers' own reflections or learned experience on the level of these categories, which are in constant interaction with the un-reflected and therefore risk making their conceptual standpoints, their view of the assigned properties, inconsistent. Already Dewey (1934) realised that experience is not only the result of conscious learning and that humans may develop their senses through these experiences. Many years later Wilson (2002) introduced the notion of the adaptive unconscious, indicating something very similar. In the investigation most participants had problems making a selection, whilst those who succeeded moreover made the selection quite swiftly.

*Human ways of being* are to be studied; they cannot be recounted. Most participants in the investigation could not make a selection and there is reason to believe that this was due to *inaccessible knowledge*, stored in the unconscious. What is affective is only guiding our ways of living indirectly through our ways of being and stimuli are needed to activate the unconscious, which cannot be activated through reflection. The stimulus in the investigation, the theme affective sustainability and the texts, were in most cases apparently not strong enough to activate the unconscious and to visualise; to create an image, which would have guided the selection.

The overall influence of the unconscious on our behaviour has become apparent in research as disparate as advanced scientific cognitive studies (Damasio), and market related product-user studies, even if these are sometimes distorted by the laboratory context (Blackler, Popovic & Mahar, Redström, Forlizzi, Disalvo & Hanington). There seem to be mainly two ways to learn: (i) by studying immediate behaviour as the studies cited above or the kind of 'thoughtless acts', proposed by Fulton Suri, (ii) by analysing traditions, as manifested in enduring ways of action as well as in long-lasting designs and objects (for example Alexander, Lash, Heelas and Negus & Pickering). An analysis of traditions is a precondition not to confuse them with either habits or nostalgia.

Immediate un-reflected behaviour and traditions express needs, which are consistent in humans and which we consequently do not reflect on, but act on. Which are these needs? We have learnt, not least from Maslow (1970), that talking about basic needs is not longer totally relevant: the needs, which we unconsciously prioritise, are those whose fulfilment makes us *feel good*, and which encompass self-actualisation as well as esteem. Objects with this ability 'take care of us'. Expanding the notion of needs suggests a parallel expansion of problems attended to by human ways of being beyond the basic and eternal of how to survive. For humans to attend these problems is called an anthropocentric stand, which we ought to be more inclined to regard as a tool than an obstacle.

To *feel good* is the sum of various affective experiences. Objects, which contribute to positive experiences of this kind, thus have an *affective competence*. This neither can nor ought to be explained in absolute properties but in criteria, to

be considered in the design process. As indicated above, there are certain complications, which cannot be overlooked. If these criteria coincide with the designer's lived experience, he or she might immediately make them part of the design process but most likely there will always be a struggle on the reflected level caused by the influence of learned experience. This influence is a distortion, Bastick argues, and affects negatively the correctness of intuitive thinking.

## 1:2 Indications with reference to the conceptual statements

The ultimate premature end for an object, which is not affectively sustainable, is to be turned into waste long before it is physically worn out. This view was voiced in the interviews with manufacturers and retailers. The *waste* problem on the ecological and social level appears to what mainly preoccupies designers (for example Hill, Blincoe, Helgeson b). Although Papanek included 'sustainability on the spiritual level' in his arguments in 1995, Whiteley<sup>155</sup> wrote as late as 1993 in his book 'Design For Society' that 'most literature about design deals only with the surface of the object' and asked for green and feminist perspectives to balance the aesthetic, to look directly at values. Affective values are not mentioned in his book. This does not indicate that designers and manufacturers engaged in sustainable design regard the spiritual level as less important, only that their awareness is low: the established sense of the concept 'sustainable design' does not generally include the affective dimension although only one of the participants in the investigation made a selection comprising mainly objects, which are ecologically sustainable<sup>156</sup>.

The most problematic of the conceptual categories is *traditions*. The participants in the investigation showed ambivalence concerning tradition by choosing generic rather than vernacular objects for their selections and by also including nostalgic objects. The lived way (intuitive) to relate to traditions, according to the exercise: *four schools of thoughts*, is to use them whenever they seem relevant. On the other hand, the learned way to relate to traditions appears to be mainly negative: rules, constraints, hampering development and more. This became evident over the course of the deconstruction and was confirmed in the exercise above. Experience is not shunned but its relation to tradition appears to diminish rather than enhance its importance. Effectively this would mean that traditions as lived experience influence an immediate idea, which in the reflected phase might be suppressed due to the learned experience concerning traditions. Introducing *type-objects*, 'docile servants', like Le Corbusier or selecting generic objects like many of the participants did in the investigation could thus be interpreted as defending a choice based on tradition: this is not a traditional object, it is a type or a basic model. These type objects or typified designs play, according to the investigation, a crucial role but in a different aspect: particular objects, which have proven to be affectively sustainable, are often developed from these.

This would mean that many *type-objects* carry information on affective competence. Relations between these objects and eternal problems could therefore

<sup>155</sup> Whiteley is not cited earlier in this work.

<sup>156</sup> This French participant chose a bag from the Leclerc supermarket chain; this bag is known to be produced with environmental concern and was a forerunner in France. What this participant probably did not know was that the bag largely contributed to pollution and waste as people discarded them everywhere. Leclerc have now tried to *personalise* their bags and sell them at the cashier desks.

be judged as an additional dimension informing affective sustainability. Human ways of being address these problems: intuitively we act in a way, which makes us *feel good* (Wilson). This indicates that eternal problems are not static but get refined and develop with lived experience. Research on how ideas are generated points in the direction of these actually being interlinked: we judge immediately and without reflection a new idea by linking it to ideas we have already experienced serving a related purpose (Goldschmidt & Tatsa). Also a solution, an idea, concerning an object/problem relation appears thus having affective competence.

*Aesthetics* could with reason be judged as the most vital of the conceptual categories. One problem with this notion is its elitist connotations: aesthetic ideals (modernism) and aesthetic dogma where a few arbiters decide what is aesthetically right or wrong (Osborne, Postrel, J. Armstrong). Other problems stem from its definition: there is confusion not only concerning its separation from beauty but also concerning what is embraced by aesthetic vision: is the aesthetic experience hampered if the function of the object is not immediately apparent? Learning from several of the designers studied in *four schools of thought*, the overall aesthetic enhances function, but not the reverse. With little regard for the aesthetic, an object does not function, which means that it ultimately will not sustain at it has no affective competence. Overall function, what is usually what is meant by function, is with no doubt a result of the aesthetic and the physical function combined.

So far in the *grounding* there is reason to address the issue of immanent and transcendent product characteristics, which were mentioned in *Bridge to part four* but has not been properly addressed earlier in this research. The reason is mainly methodological (see further chapter II): this line of inquiry is the result of questions raised when concluding the research. Castelli (2003, a) explains that it was Sottsass' design of the Tekne 3 typewriter by Olivetti, which made him [Castelli] understand what makes a design transitive [and inspired him to write a book on this subject. An immanent product *looks its function*: 'The design of an immanent product is also an "eloquent" design, already containing the recognizable characters of its marketing destiny and the contents of its communication in its DNA'<sup>157</sup> (2003, a). The important difference between the immanent and the transcendent product is that the former is designed to bring out 'the genesis of the object in itself', the latter is 'aimed directly at something emotionally intrinsic'. Pleasure, for Castelli, goes as for Jordan (2000) beyond usability, but has to create a transitive design to be combined with an aesthetic expressing the immanent qualities. He exemplifies with the iMac by Apple. Immanent products have, according to Castelli, 'affective records' (1999, p. 59) as it 'links memories of archetypes to contemporary emotions'. The transcendent part of the design takes into consideration these emotions and creates 'aesthetic pleasure', which is unconscious and goes beyond experience, Castelli claims, evidently not aware, or not convinced, that experience might also be lived.

There is little in the analysis and applied exercises, which opposes the claim that aesthetics works on the unconscious level and the visual impression is therefore crucial. The confusion arises when the aesthetically pleasing is equalled to the beautiful and also when aesthetics is equated with simplicity. There is

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<sup>157</sup> Castelli argues that it is possible to capture 'the emotional DNA' of a product and calls it 'the soul of objects' (2003, b)

evidence of this confusion in all the applied exercises and Postrel's analysis<sup>158</sup>, which goes beyond theory, also affirms this bias and points to it as a design problem. Two notions are of special interest when discussing this matter: visual simplification and visual perfection. The first notion gets easily biased in the direction of simplicity (Bastick, Norman), the second in the direction of beauty (Kyander, Menke, Postrel)

Simplification ought to be interpreted on the level of understanding function and easing the visual sense, whilst simplicity has to be seen as a quality. It has become evident that misconceptions regarding a causal relationship between these two notions counteract affective sustainability, as anonymity appears to impede the understanding and recollection of the object.

The idea of *time* as a process instead of an era has proven its significance through the noticeable overall lack of importance assigned to *a (specific) time* observed in all the applied exercises, even if *the approach to time* differs: participants in the investigation and the interviewees emphasised how some objects appear to *exist outside their immediate temporal context* or *would allow them to be taken out of this context*. This indicates, of course, that these objects will be relevant also in the future. In *four schools of thought*, the analysed designers, with the exception of those belonging to the *rationalists*, showed a noticeable disregard for time related issues.

The *new* as an example of development and even innovation stands out as deeply rooted in western culture according to the analyses in the deconstruction but appears to be less relevant when analysing the selected designers' way of thinking. Participants in the investigation make references to the sustainability debate and related discussions about designers' social responsibility in their individual comments touching *newness*. In the commercial world the issue of newness concerns more the costs versus the benefit of innovation than the [waste] problem of *how a new almost simultaneously creates an old*. Media is accused by all the interviewees of contributing to the fixation with *the new* by constantly focusing on newness rather than on development, when they report from furniture exhibitions, home shows and fairs.

The applied exercises show, more generally, that whilst *now* is understood as a well-defined time, *now time* is very flexible. Some confusion concerning the significance of objects seems to be resulting from uncertainty about the sense in which *now* is applied.

The most vital indication on the level of *perception* is altogether affective sustainability as *a lived experience*: this indication is confirmed not only through the analyses in the deconstruction but also through the applied exercises and subsequent analyses.

Perception is the activity through which we live experience, which in turn is the foundation for *intuition*. Even if scientists and scholars debate the extent to which we may rely on the correctness of intuition, there appears to be pervasive consensus concerning how it is constituted and its importance for decision-making (Damasio, Bastick, Wilson). The term *gut feeling* has popularly come to substitute *intuition* as a construct and an expression for a decision factor, which is not ruled by reason and thus not cognitive (Wilson). The expression was frequently used by the interviewees and referred to as an important factor in decision-making, not least as it, according to them, considered immaterial qualities in the objects

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<sup>158</sup> Postrel speaks about beauty in terms of a reflected sensual feeling.

concerned. There is some evidence that intuition is still slightly stigmatised (Bastick, Lawson, Morrison). When intuition acts as a generator of an idea, it might thus direct the designer to the solution, not only through an image but also by the number of immediate links to other ideas the first idea gives rise to. Being fixed to the idea stage is not uncommon for designers, in *four schools of thought* named *restless perception*, and regarded as a matter for concern. On the other hand, there are in *four schools of thought* also indications that the lack of constraints in the school *restless perception* has, in fact, conditioned the design of timeless objects (Jacobsen, Arad, Sottsass). Moving between idea and conceptual space is otherwise often recognised as imperative but the analyses give few indications of how this is actually done. The notion of *visual thoughts* is an exception (de Portzamparc). It states that first when an idea is described in words, an image is created and the idea understood for its potential and limitations.

*Human ways of being* are related to perception as these, according to the analyses, seem to constantly adapt through lived experience, even if basically determined by genetic factors, which are also determining *individual ways of being*. The relation between these two is often expressed in terms of *what humans have in common*. Identification of *adapted* rather than *basic needs* appears crucial for the creation of affective sustainability. How is this done?

The suggestion to study *un-reflected behaviour* or *thoughtless acts* is allegedly based on practical experiences, mainly observations. These were found fairly easy to extrapolate into acts of higher order, although judged as low order acts, and thus recognising the relation between basic and adapted needs.

Intuitive feeling is strictly speaking the experience of one individual, but as argued, nevertheless contains information on what might be more generally relevant. Returning to *visual thoughts*, there are indications that conceptualising an intuitive feeling by writing it down creates an image, or a visualised thought, which would be easier to balance against important *parameters for correctness* than a pure product of thought.

## 2. Into practice

There is reason to claim that the deconstruction, the analyses and the applied exercises have provided enough indications to allow for the construction of *parameters, which allow intuitive judgements to be adjusted without being distorted*. However, before continuing, the research question ought to be recalled:

***What makes some objects retain their significance over time and in changing human contexts?***

This question prompted two successive questions:

1. Can knowledge on how to make an object retain its significance over time in a changing human context be accessed and applied?
2. Will this knowledge eventually contribute to an improved and more holistic view on sustainability?

The actual research question is addressed with the indications linked to the grounded theory, while the successive questions are approached via the conceptual statements. There is evidently strong support for affective sustainability as a lived experience, which, however, has to be critically balanced

by knowledge concerning *what humans have in common* as opposed what is personal and individual.

This research has proceeded by locating, analysing and combining knowledge in alternative ways with the expressed aim of establishing a platform for affective sustainability and constructing a number of parameters for further direction and practical access. The next chapter (VII), Directions, concludes the completed research by presenting this platform and introducing these parameters. This chapter also includes proposals for continued research and in a final discussion suggests possible subject areas to be added to the agenda for sustainable development.



***Bridge to part five:***

***Affective sustainability into practice:  
from concept to quality***

Substituting affectively sustainable for timeless was a logical step aiming at not only reconstructing the meaning of the phenomenon but also establishing a corresponding semiotic, its relevance as a sign. Designating, affective sustainability, as a phenomenon would stand in opposition to its change of character: from having mostly tacit properties, as suggested by timelessness, to having more explicit properties as indicated by the new denomination. Affective sustainability has throughout part three, the application phase, in consequence been named a concept.

The aim of the fifth part and the final chapter, Directions, is to put affective sustainability into the context of practice, where its realisation is likely to be facilitated by an even more precise apprehension: as a quality.

## **Part five: Into practice**

## Chapter VII. Directions.

### 1. Nature of directions

Chapter IV, Reconstruction, concluded part two, *The Timeless*, which was mainly focused on the deconstruction of the phenomenon. The latest chapter VI, Grounding, concluded part three, *The Affectively Sustainable* and reported on the applications as well as the analyses these instigated, chapter V.

Chapter VII brings the entire research to a close by, in the first place, interpreting and, secondly, translating the conclusions from part four to a number of directions, which suggest the way *Into Practice*, the fifth and final part of my research.

The directions are presented under different headings following the strength of the indications:

1. Parameters to consider when designing.
2. Additions to current design discourse.
3. Proposal for continued research.

As mentioned earlier, the research has been a quest with the aim of exploring, indicating and informing rather than of producing scientifically viable results and substantiating a theory: proving hypotheses. The directions are presented under different headings, which indicate their nature as a function of how unequivocal the reasons underpinning them are. The parameters express the strongest indications this research has produced and, at least from a practitioner point of view, it is imperative to state them as unequivocal as possible.

#### 1:1 The parameters

The conceptual statements serve as hypotheses for the parameters, as stated in chapter IV. Through the applications and the continued analyses these hypotheses have been assessed to learn if the indications are precise enough to make them function as parameters for affective sustainability. However, certain preconditions have to be in place for designers to make use of these. *The designer need to:*

- recognise affective sustainability as an explicit quality, which separates it from the more tacit phenomenon of timelessness
- understand the difference between lived and learned experience respectively
- appreciate affective sustainability as a lived experience
- recognise lived experience as the foundation for intuition [or what is commonly called gut feeling]

If these preconditions are met, the designer has established a platform from which to think and act. The designer's aim is primarily to create a solution contributing positively to other people's lives, although he or she surely wants the

solution to be also personally satisfying even if not personal in the same sense as a piece of art. This might well be personal, as it is not aimed at offering a service to other people.

Being guided solely by intuition poses a risk for the designer of drawing conclusions, which are coloured by his or her individual ways of being when generalising on the level of what humans have in common. This approach to sustainability would, moreover, not be accurate enough as affective design is not necessarily sustainable.

The platform is therefore only a precondition, enabling the designer to understand and make the most of the parameters. They are the guides, which hopefully inform and initiate alternative thinking, crucial for the pursuit of affective sustainability. Moreover, they might be considered as the cornerstones of a Handbook.<sup>159</sup>

#### 1:1:1 The first parameter – INTERACT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

Lived experience often generates the first design idea, which therefore by definition has affective properties: a precondition but not a warranty for sustainability.

Furthermore, lived experience is, according to progressive research, not only of low order but also guided by interests, exposure and the resulting knowledge. Designers are therefore likely to have unconsciously registered peoples' reactions and actions over time as part of this experience. As noted above, an intuitive or first idea might be biased by the individual designer's personality and certain factors should hence not form part of the base for generalisations even if several affective properties are generally valid and will make an imagined user react as the designer: this appears to be a good idea.

Interaction with his or her lived experience therefore enables the designer to proceed without distorting or discarding this first idea. Depending on *the nature of the first idea* and the problem it addresses, there are different ways to progress.

Also *crude ideas* will probably benefit from being *written down* rather than sketched or both. Writing is a way to create images, which with reference to the notion of '*visual thoughts*' are more refined than those resulting from ideas not formulated in words. Narrating an idea is moreover a method to lay bare weaknesses, including the most evident inherent personal biases. Furthermore, the risk of 'fixation' due to an idea being sketched in a very early phase of the design process is less significant. Being fixed to the idea stage is not equivalent.

A more *refined idea* could be *linked to earlier ideas or concepts* by immediate association, which would enhance the general properties of the new idea and also indicate its inherent adaptive competence. The notion of 'interlinking ideas' refers mainly to giving rise to new ideas, whilst linking, generally, could include existing concepts and solutions as well as ideas formulated for other purposes or solutions.

We are not able to provide advice about our un-reflected reactions and actions, as they are the result of lived experience. This information will be difficult to access on command, as learned by earlier analysis. These '*thoughtless acts*' might therefore need to be purposely studied through observation of people in various normal situations.

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<sup>159</sup> As already mentioned in chapter I, Introduction, a Handbook is planned as a continuation and development of this research.

The idea is likely to benefit from this interaction as various weaknesses and strengths have a chance to be identified. Its affective competence has been enhanced even if not refined.

1:1:2 The second parameter – RECOGNISE TRADITIONS AS EXPERIENCE

Depending on the designer's relation to traditions, these could intervene in the idea in a number of ways. Recognising the idea as traditional could be seen as a weakness or a strength and consequently contribute to either discarding or, alternatively disguising, or reinforcing the idea.

In the first situation, learned experience is regarded as more significant than lived and the precondition: affective sustainability as lived experience thus overruled. The idea risks being developed in the direction of human ways of living rather than their ways of being.

Two scenarios possibly result from the second situation and both refer to '*type objects versus particular objects*'. Being aware of the idea's adherence to tradition, the designer might get fixated with a type object, which risks intervening in the idea in a negative sense: moving it in the direction of replication. Alternatively the designer might use the type object as a point of reference when trailing affective competence: following the transformation of basic needs to *adapted needs or feel good needs* as manifested in particular objects. The successful adaptation of classical architecture's basic components to modern buildings is one practical example of this.<sup>160</sup>

*Traditionality* is not an established expression but implies *recognition of traditions rather than being ruled by traditions*, which is the customary interpretation of traditionalism.

1:1:3 The third parameter – APPRECIATE THE AESTHETIC OF THE UNCOMPLICATED

Simplicity is not uncomplicated. Judging by reactions to '*simple*' designs and minimalism, it is on the contrary rather demanding. This could be explained by simplicity easily approaching a kind of anonymity. It takes a lot experience to differentiate between objects and also spaces of this kind if it is at all possible for a majority of people,<sup>161</sup> which would explain part of the almost elitist stigma making the aesthetic problematical.

*Simplification* means by definition to make things less complicated. As already argued, direct perception does not only concern understanding but also behaviour. The function of an object must therefore be apparent: it must look its purpose, be an immanent product. What is easily identified and understood is likewise recollected. Simplicity plays a vital role for affective sustainability but has to be balanced: conspicuous properties, which include decorative elements, help identification to a certain extent. However, when a boundary is surpassed, these tend on the contrary to impede this process. Simplification is also about reminding: an object, which contains something familiar is more easily understood and recollected. Tradition thus has a link to simplification.

*Aesthetic judgements are thus un-reflected* and reflect human ways of being, whilst *beauty is reflected* and reflects human ways of living.

<sup>160</sup> See chapter III, section 3:3:5, referring to the works of Louis Kahn. See also figure 17.

<sup>161</sup> This is a returning claim when Bastick (2003) analyses the correctness of intuitive thought

#### 1:1:4 The fourth parameter – UNDERSTAND THE EMOTIONAL SET

Emotions are not solely affective. The '*emotional set*' comprises three components: *motor, affect and cognition*. This means that emotions are more 'contemporary', more likely to be influenced by human ways of living than the senses, which produces affect. Emotional design which does not consider the substance and authenticity of the object, defined as not only its purpose and function but also the recognition and memories it evokes, will not be affectively sustainable. The likes of 'Phantile Drives' or other kinds of design components, which try to unfurl the deeply embedded meaning in a product, have to be applied with good judgement otherwise they will activate short-lived emotions. These risk having the opposite effect: contributing to affective unsustainability.

Pleasure is normally linked to affect; an object may induce aesthetic pleasure. There is, however, also another link which has emerged as a result of the number of objects we are surrounded by on a daily basis: aesthetics alone is not enough to infuse pleasure, this sense needs support from the rest of the emotional set. pleasurable products thus have not necessarily a long lifespan. Emotions and pleasure need thus to be reassessed.

#### 1:1:5 The fifth parameter – DISREGARD TIME

This almost inappropriate imperative should be interpreted as: *stand free of the immediate temporal context*. Doubts could naturally be raised whether this is at all possible. However, attempting to disregard time would immediately set the focus on human ways of being as opposed to living.

Lifting a design idea out of its temporal context is meaningless if you do not know where to take it next. With the reference to time annulled, reasoning might look like heading in the direction of the timeless. Effectively, the idea has to be projected into another context, which most logically would be the future. Lack of knowledge concerning what is to come would make it difficult to identify points of reference here and thus complicate the process. *Projection into the past* would therefore be the only way to find points of reference and by binding them together, allowing *a line to be drawn towards the future*: what would have made this idea work in the past, discounting technicalities? These features are probably what will make the idea work in the future also: they will have affective competence or have an affective record.

### 1:2 Additions to design discourse

The parameters represent the strongest indications, although there are other findings, which merit being considered as important subjects for discussions on design theory and practice.

#### 1:2:1 HUMAN WAYS OF BEING AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

*Lived experience* is a vital notion for the creation of a platform for affective sustainability. There are strong indications, not least through the applied exercise, *a fictional online exhibition*, that affectively sustainable objects are difficult to appoint intellectually, although there is not unanimity within cognitive science on the power balance between the unconscious and the conscious, nor is there in that what concerns experience and decision-making. This lack of accord has its roots in the dichotomy body and mind, persisting since ancient Greek and which is evidently still influential. Various researchers and scholars; Damasio, Bastick, Wilson and Dennet to mention a few, have through cognitive studies and



other research *demystified the mind* and introduced a scientific approach, which has also started to inform philosophy. Dennet, though a philosopher, claims that the functioning of the human mind can be fully explained in scientific terms, while scientist like Damasio, transdisciplinary researchers like Bastick and Norman and scholars like Wilson uphold more moderate, if not entirely coinciding views. The relevance of lived experience for design might be best expressed through the notions of *human ways of being* and *human ways of living respectively*, which have been introduced as part of this research. Whilst the former basically refers to lived and the latter to learned experience, it is not evident on which level they interact: when basic needs evolve into adaptive needs, do they transcend the border between being and living by the *need to feel good*?

It might be significant that a well-known professor in cognitive science and not in ethnology opens an exhibition called 'Why save this?' on the overall theme 'worth remembering', displaying and narrating 30 persons' choice of artefacts they have decided to keep from year to year.<sup>162</sup>

#### 1:2:2 AFFECTIVE AND EMOTIONAL

Learning from the analyses there is confusion on the level of the affective, emotional and pleasurable but enough indications for design to substantiate a parameter: *assess emotion and pleasure*. Even spiritual might be included among these denominations, which are sometimes used quite carelessly in an effort to describe object quality. These misconceptions were reported on earlier in this research, but are nevertheless worth emphasising again, not least as various thesauruses present affective and emotional mainly as synonyms. Affect, as assessed in this research, *influences emotions* through what is perceived by the five senses. Bastick proposes, as already discussed, that there is not only an affective component in the emotional set but also a cognitive as well as a motor component. Furthermore, Damasio and others building on his research, have demonstrated that emotions are vital in decision-making but very personality oriented. Opposed to perception and the senses, they are thereby difficult to generalise about in a design perspective.

#### 1:2:3 AESTHETICS AND BEAUTY

The comment concluding the description of the third parameter, *the aesthetic of the uncomplicated*, states convincingly that beauty is reflected whilst aesthetics is not. Analyses throughout this research have pointed in this direction with the exception of several designers referring to beauty as something, which is experienced by immediate visual perception. If apprehending beauty this way, the designer risk focusing on the surface of objects and therefore aiming at visual perfection. Moreover, if this is set as a standard for best function, the latter might suffer rather than being improved. Beauty thus appears to be easily contradictory: it should indicate content but is interpreted as surface. Instead of being a reflected confirmation of what the senses have perceived, beauty is here recognised as direct appreciation.

From a design point of view this might complicate not only the relation between surface: the aesthetic, and content: the function, but also rise confusion on the role of visual expression. Unintended emphasis on styling might be the result.

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<sup>162</sup> Nathéll, I. (2006) Föremål berättar. *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*. 9 June, 2006, p. 11. 'Peter Gärdefors opens the exhibition with a key note speech June 11 2006'.

#### 1:2:4 CULTURE AND SIMPLIFICATION

Culture not merely reflects the complexity of human ways of being and living but exerts a defining impact. However, there is evidence that the cultural impact is less significant the more basic the need or eternal the problem, but it can nevertheless not be overlooked. The introduction of the notion, *adapted needs*, gives new actuality to the role of culture in the basic needs perpetual, but slow adaptation to a changing context.

Our increasingly multicultural societies pose another challenge to designers: what represents simplification in the westernised world does not necessarily imply the same elsewhere. Variations are referable to culture's influence on cognition and not to this working differently. Perception and lived experience are essentially interdependent and the latter is gathered in a context, where culture is playing a vital role.

The influences of modernism in various parts of the world are briefly mentioned in chapter III. Examples from architecture show how cultures effectively have married and initiated development but still not succeeded in avoiding *clichés* like some kind of adhered *cultural branding*. This branding is most certainly facilitating recognition and recollection but risk hampering development if they *mistakenly are identified as carriers of affective competence*.<sup>163</sup>

#### 1:2:5 THE OBJECT OR THE DESIGN

Replication and copying as a means of enhancing timelessness in objects and in the environment are debated and often more criticised than celebrated. The status of retro design is generally low. Traditionality and simplification [through recognisable features] could easily be interpreted as promoting replication. Whether it is the object or the design, which is affectively sustainable has as yet not been given a plain answer. Findings indicating, *it might be either* certainly appear very ambiguous but might however be fairly accurate. There are objects, which can be reproduced without anyone mentioning replication, retro design and lack of new ideas. They demonstrate thus their affective record. *Regarding other objects, the affective record and the affective competence is a design feature, which has to be identified*. Suggestions on how to identify the affective competence are part of the directions. The issue is critical to avoid affective sustainability being appropriated and imbued with negative meaning like counteracting innovation and being counterproductive. Affective record and affective competence would therefore benefit from being further discussed.

### 1:3 Waiting to be researched

Very little research is definitive, leaving us with little more to add. On the contrary, research at its best opens up new territory, which inspires continuation. The ideal scenario from a personal perspective would be that affective sustainability is further researched on the conceptual level: becoming more distinct and accessible as a quality. Refinement of parameters would be an important contribution. Judging and making priorities regarding continued research is double-edged, as it would reflect my thinking.

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<sup>163</sup> See chapter III, section 3:3:5 figure 1, *Parliament building in Dhaka, Bangladesh*, officially recognised as an example of a spectacular building with affective competence.

As pointed out above, there are several interesting threads and issues, which would benefit from further debate and discussion. Research within cognitive science and neuroscience has vital links to my subject and is furthermore claiming important new territory. However, and disregarding eventual partiality, one research direction would merit being given priority. It departs from a notion, which has reappeared in the argument in this section: simplification. There are a variety of questions to be asked:

*What do we know about the un-reflected brain process of simplification?*

*How do these interact with the human context?*

*Can reflected processes aiming at simplifying learning, inform us about the un-reflected? Is this relevant also on the level of interaction?*

## 2. Addition of a relevant subject area to the project of sustainable development

We have over the course of this research seen notions and denominations on the theme of enduring objects come and go: in addition to the evident, timeless, there have been: classic, eternal, long lifespan, ever-green and icon, to mention the most frequent. Part of the aim of this research has been to clarify what they express or intend to express rather than trying to make them redundant. The motive has been to enhance the subject area, which all these concepts in some way or other refer to: sustainability. The denominations will no doubt live on and moreover continue to be used in various contexts and refer to more or less precise qualities or conditions. However, a first most optimistic hope is that *affective sustainability* will be accepted and successively established professionally: with who ever it may concern. The second most optimistic hope is that it will help demonstrate the need for a conceptual change concerning sustainability. Saying this, it is worth emphasising that affective sustainability as well the total concept of sustaining has to be constantly reconsidered as not to develop into measures to sustain the unsustainable. To secure future human well-being is also to avoid Maslow's pyramid to be turned upside down: to allow self-actualisation and esteem to overshadow love/belonging, safety and physiological needs.

A precondition for any success is that affective sustainability stays unambiguous and does not get distorted in the process. Its role might be crucial: either this new denomination penetrates, also conceptually, or the ambiguity of the existing and much used denominations continue to direct discourse, research and achievements on sustainability thus overlooking the affective perspective. A fair test of its capacity to communicate is to let it literally replace related words in texts on sustainability.

(i) 'However, our study participants reminded us that, above and beyond any formal qualities, the notion of timelessness/*affective sustainability* is ultimately subjective.' (Marchand, p. 126, 2004)<sup>164</sup>

The fact that many people like the same music, painting, objects and so forth indicates the existence of affective commonality.

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<sup>164</sup> Marchand presented this paper on a conference on sustainability held in Rotterdam 2004: 'Eternally Yours. Time in Design.'

(ii) 'I doubt we'll ever build a host of objects that are also "multigenerational heirlooms"/ *affectively sustainable*. They wouldn't burden the environment very much, but they wouldn't meet our needs, because our needs are always changing.' (when arguing about timeless buildings, Sterling, p. 144, 2005)<sup>165</sup>

The existence of various well functioning objects, which date way back, indicates that the statement: 'needs are always changing' is relative.

*Although taken out of their context, these quotes illustrate, not only that affective sustainability is superior as a communicator but also how the meaning of the sentences become slightly absurd when an obscure denomination is replaced by a more explicit. Even so, these being only two examples, the negative impact of such confusions on the progress of creating sustainable societies should not be ignored.*

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<sup>165</sup> Sterling is a journalist and writer, also called a 'fiend' for design, since 2005 'Visionary-in-Residence at Art Centre College of Design in Pasadena, USA. Lorraine Wild, professor at the California Institute of the Arts, aided with the cited book.

## Epilogue.

As a researcher and an author you cannot act other than within the limits set up by language, patrimony and cultural background, which obviously includes religion. Being a Scandinavian and used to a harsh climate, my aesthetic sense is trained in an environment, which is shaped accordingly: something, which to a person from another part of the world might appear *poor*, appeals to me as *honest and true*. To a certain extent this might have influenced how I define 'simple', simplicity and simplification and therefore how I am *informing designers*.

### Informing designers

*Affective sustainability is a lived experience and consequently works on the unconscious level and is significant for human ways of being: These do not change but adapt and adjust to a changing human context resulting in altered ways of living.*

To sustain, an object or artefact must therefore also have an affective competence: the ability to address human ways of being not withstanding their constant adaptation.

Designers are recommended to address the affective competence of an object by considering certain parameters when designing. The following will be further developed in a planned Handbook.

Conceptualise ideas:

- *Interact with lived experience*

Learn about basic and adapted needs:

- *Recognise traditions as experience*

Rethink the 'simple' and simplicity:

- *Appreciate the aesthetic of the uncomplicated: simplification*

Reconsider affect, emotion and pleasure.

- *Understand the composition of the emotional set: motor, affective and cognitive components.*

Link the past with the future:

- *Disregard time as new.*

'Rather than inviting in more non-design disciplines, why not first engage with actual designers and the problems they encounter. From this point of departure a coherent framework of knowledge could be developed that makes the insightful connections between design and other disciplines. An admirable goal for design historians would be to study designers tacit knowledge, make it explicit and then suggest how that knowledge may be improved through exposure to knowledge from other disciplines.' (McCullagh, 2000, p. 44).



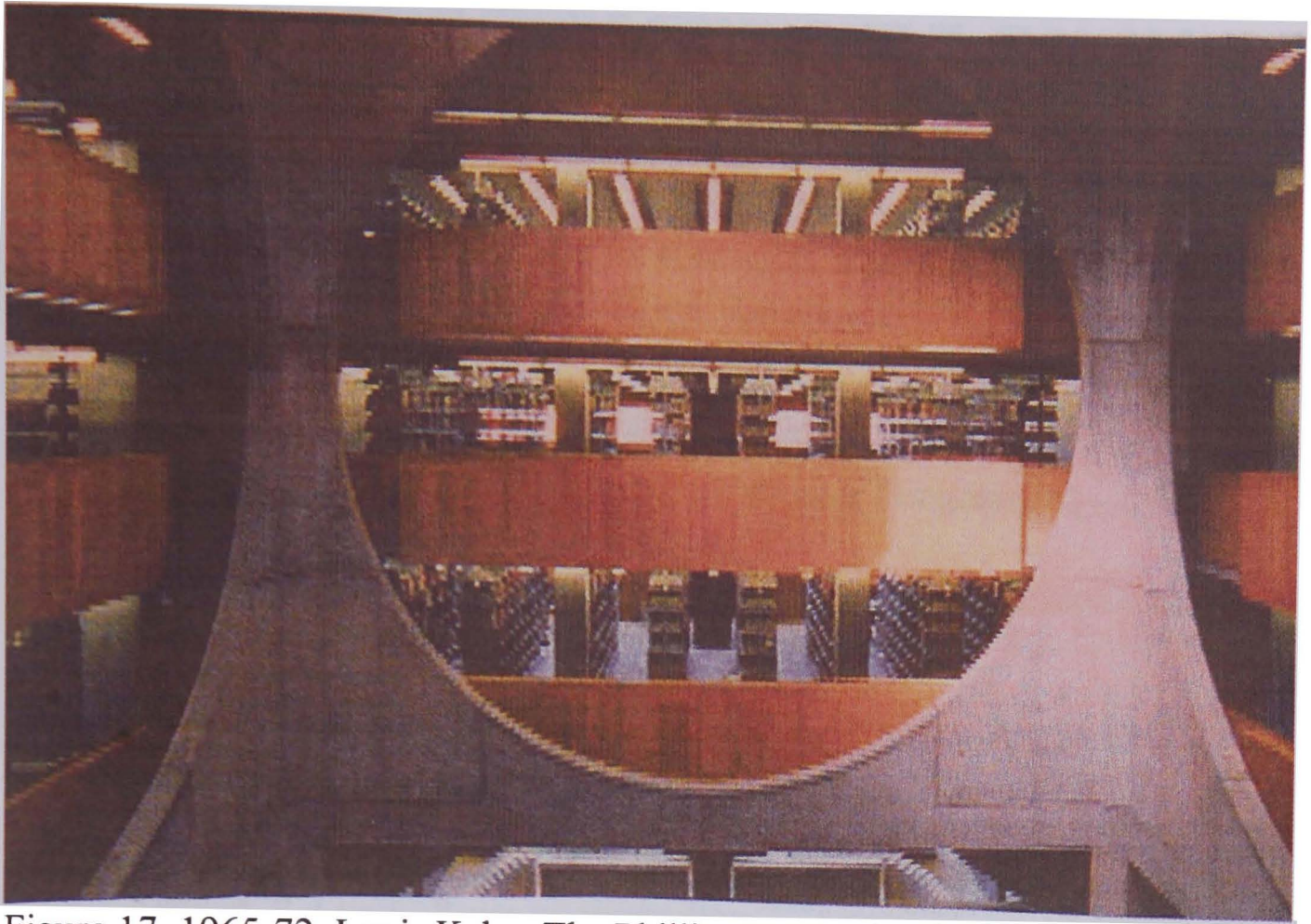


Figure 17. 1965-72, Louis Kahn: The Phillips Exeter Academy Library, New Hampshire, USA

**Author's statement.**

Apart from the sources acknowledged in Bibliography and Bibliography B, I have not consulted any other sources of material or received any assistance other than from my tutors: Martin Woolley and Marina Wallace, to whom I want to express my deep gratitude.



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Appendix A.  
10 pages.

[www.borjesson-mk.se](http://www.borjesson-mk.se)

(Log in: FOREVER)

WELCOME!

-  
-

Welcome to this research site.

My name is Kristina Börjesson. The research project in which you are taking part is an explorative phase of my PhD work entitled: The Affective Sustainability of Objects; a search for causal connections. Studies of theory, process and practice.

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USERNAME:

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Log in



## INSTRUCTION

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## INSTRUCTION

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## BACKGROUND

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## CURATE

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## CONTACT

*Imagine. You are asked to help curate an exhibition on the theme *Affective Sustainability*. The short instruction you get is to choose 5 objects, fashion and graphic design excluded, which have retained their significance over time in a changing human context. These are objects which you know has been around for quite a long time and which you think will stay around and describe them in short. As this is research and fictional you will have to choose one (1) text among four (4) given as a presentation in the exhibition catalogue but you will also have the opportunity to complement with a text you have formulated yourself.*

### Ready to start?

Click on **CURATE**, top left of page.

You will come to **CURATE A**, where you fill in your details.

Click on **Next**, bottom of page centre.

You will come to **CURATE B-1**, where you fill in your choice of object 1 in the box under Headline. If you think the description you write here is enough to make clear what object you are referring to, you don't have to describe it further in the box Descriptive text or send an Attachment.

Click on **Next**, bottom page centre.

You will come to **CURATE B-2** where you fill in your choice of object 2 and follow the same routine as above.

A click on **Next** will then take you to **CURATE B-3** for object 3, to **CURATE B-4** for object 4 and finally to **CURATE B-5** for object 5.

A click on **Next** after **CURATE B-5** will take you to **Curate C** where you will be given four (4) alternative texts to read by clicking on respectively. When you have read them all, make your choice by either clicking on Text 1, Text 2, Text 3 or Text 4.

Click on **Next** to continue to **CURATE D**. In the box provided you might want to add your own text for the fictional exhibition catalogue.

### Finished?

Click on **SUBMIT** to send.

### Want to give it another thought?

You can use **Back** to review your earlier choices, **INSTRUCTION** or **BACKGROUND** to read more, **CURATE** to arrive at **CURATE A** (your details) and then click **Next** to review. You may also choose **CONTACT** if you want to ask questions.

Good luck!

[Top of page](#)



**BACKGROUND**

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**INSTRUCTION**

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**BACKGROUND**

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**CURATE**

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**CONTACT****ABOUT ME**

I am originally from Sweden, now more of a European citizen and have been a professional for more than 30 years. For several of these I have focused on how to communicate design as a socially and commercially important activity. Due to cultural issues becoming increasingly important for communication in general in the nineties, I decided to improve my theoretical skills [I hold a Swedish Masters degree in marketing] and more recently obtained a Masters degree in Communication at Goldsmiths College, University of London. My thesis was about designers as interpreters of culture and led to where I am today, a PhD student. I transferred with my tutor Martin Woolley to Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, which together with 4 other colleges became University of the Arts London (UAL) in 2004.

**ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

What are we doing with things that have never made it into our senses? We are getting rid of them, whether they are physically worn or not. The scale of waste created this way is difficult to estimate but thought to be much more substantial than imagined. This is what has inspired my current research.

Initially through an analysis of texts, I deconstructed the denomination 'timeless', several of its abbreviations and 'synonyms'. This analysis has been cross-disciplinary and has resulted in the construction of new meaning, which in consequence has made timeless irrelevant as a denomination. The more adequate 'Affective Sustainability' has replaced it. When working with this new meaning a number of underlying connections have become evident. I have formulated these as a grounded theory, which I am now further exploring with your help.

Thanks in advance!

[Top of page](#)



CURATE

A

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INSTRUCTION

Please fill in your details below. If you have forgotten to fill in something, clicking **Next** will give you a reminder.

BACKGROUND

CURATE

GENDER

☐ FEMALE

☐ MALE

CONTACT

AGE

NATIONALITY

DIRECTION OF STUDIES

☐ FURNITURE DESIGN

☐ PRODUCT DESIGN (other)

☐ INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

[Next >>](#)

## CURATE

B-1

-  
-

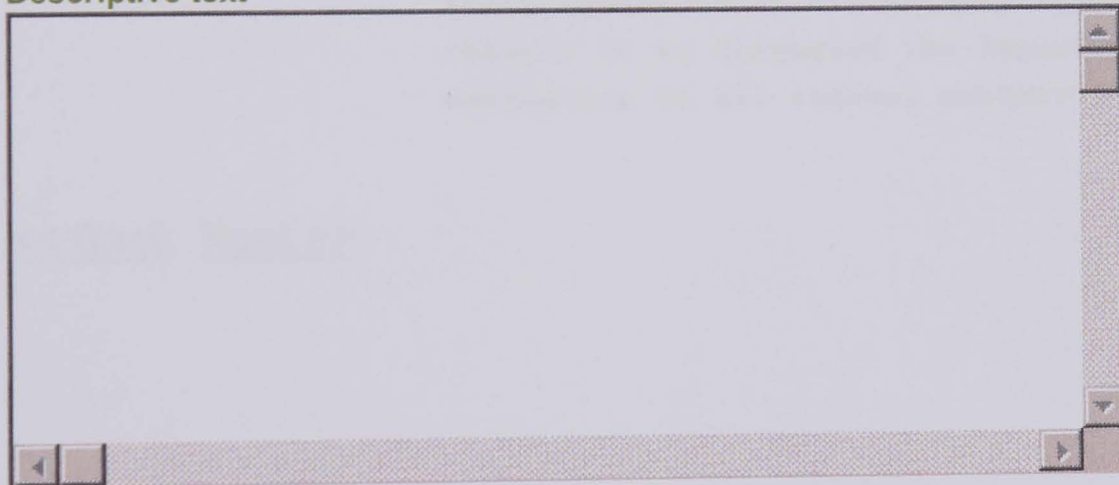
## What you have to do:

- \* In the box under **Headline**: Name your choice of object 1 with a short description; the name of it (if it has one), the name of the designer (if known) or any other information relevant to identify the object.

## What you can do if you want to:

- \* Use the field **Descriptive text** for a more thorough description.
- \* Refer to an **Attachment** (photo, sketch, drawing etc.) Files accepted are pdf, Word, Power Point, jpg and gif.

Please note that depending on your Internet connection heavy files (many kilobytes, kb) might take long time to send and give you trouble when submitting. Try to reduce the amount of kilobytes before attaching. Please click on **CONTACT** if you need help.

**Headline****Descriptive text****Attachment** [<< Back](#) [Next >>](#)



CURATE

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What you have to do:

- \* Choose one of the four text provided for a presentation of the exhibition in a fictional catalogue. You may read the texts by clicking on Text 1, Text 2, Text 3 and Text 4 respectively as many times as you like before making your final choice.

INSTRUCTION

BACKGROUND


CURATE

CONTACT

Objects chosen

- 1 Object 1
- 2 Object 2
- 3 Object 3
- 4 Object 4
- 5 Object 5

Texts

 Text1     Text2     Text3     Text4

The objects shown in this exhibition are all by designers who are either part of the modernist movement or conform to the ideas leading up to it. Alternatively they are highly influenced by it. This selection is not the result of a strategic choice but a natural one, following the theme. The absence of ornamentation is of course striking, as is the minimal detailing. The “Form follows function” device is said to mark the starting point of modernism. Louis Sullivan already formulated it in 1896, but to use this expression to further underline the characteristics of affectively sustainable objects is to disregard the importance of aesthetics in all sensual matters.

<< Back   Next >>

CURATE

-  
-

INSTRUCTION

BACKGROUND

CURATE

CONTACT

What you can do if you want to:

- \* Write your own text to be included in a presentation of the exhibition in a fictional catalogue.

Objects chosen

- 1 Object 1
- 2 Object 2
- 3 Object 3
- 4 Object 4
- 5 Object 5

Chosen text: Text1

Text

<< Back Next >>

END

OF

CURATING

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INSTRUCTION

Click **SUBMIT** to send. Once you have submitted your response, you can't do any more changes or corrections.

BACKGROUND

Want to give it another thought?

Use the links top left of page to read more or click **Back** to review your choices.

You can also log off and log on later or another day from the same computer to review and finish the exercise.

CURATECONTACT

Please note this limitation: If you choose to log off before you have finished and want to log on again later to complete, this is only possible if you use the same computer as the first time you were logged on.

<< Back SUBMIT



CURATE

FINISHED

-  
-

INSTRUCTION

Thank you for participating!

BACKGROUND

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me on the e-mail address below. I will be happy to assist. I am also very open to a continued dialogue about Affective Sustainability.

CURATE

CONTACT

[kristina@borjesson-mk.se](mailto:kristina@borjesson-mk.se)



Appendix B  
English

CONTACT

- 
- 

INSTRUCTION

If you have any problems with this exercise.  
If you want to express views of any kind.  
If you want to start a dialogue.

BACKGROUND

CURATE

Please send me an e-mail!

[kristina@borjesson-mk.se](mailto:kristina@borjesson-mk.se)

CONTACT

## Appendix B.

Page 1 (of 2).

## E-mail message: follow-up questions concerning the online workshop.

From: "Kristina Borjesson" <Kristina@borjesson-mk.se>  
 To: "lynn jones" <lynn@lynnjones.demon.co.uk>; "Alex Milton" <a.milton@eca.ac.uk>  
 Subject: TThe Affective Sustainability of Objects. Please forward as agreed!  
 Date: 07 December 2005 15:43

Thanks to you who have helped me curate my 'exhibition'. You may stop reading here!

To you who haven't been able to: I am sure you have a good reason! Please continue to read below!

Part of my research on affective sustainability involves cognitive psychology and your reasons for not doing the exercise may consequently be of interest for my ongoing work. You would do me an enormous favour by pressing forward, putting X on the dotted line just below one or more of the three propositions below, which correspond best to your reason/s - alternatively you may give your own reason as a fourth - and send it

To: kristina@borjesson-mk.se

Kind regards

Kristina Börjesson,

Central Saint Martins College, UAL

My reason/s:

1. I was determined to do the exercise but when I sat down with it, each consideration took a lot of time, which I haven't got right now. ....

2. I think it is difficult to pick out objects of this kind intellectually. It is more about the feeling I get when I actually come across them.

....

## Appendix B.

Page 2.

3. When I returned to review the object I had chosen, they felt wrong. I haven't had the time to engage in it since.

....

4.

□

## Appendix C

The affective sustainability of objects.

Structure/headings for phone interview with IKEA

- Products with staying power
- Icon products
- To keep or change
- New product? New style?
- *Gut feeling* – Feel good
- Tradition – Experience
- Affective Sustainability

## Appendix D

### The affective sustainability of objects.

#### Structure for interview with Isokon Plus and Källemo.

1. If you look at the designs from the 30's, why have they endured their importance?
2. Is there something more to the design philosophy behind these than the modernist approach of simplicity, functionality and 'design for a better world' (social pathos)?
3. The new designs, which you suppose to be the next generation of classics, how do you identify them?
  - A. By looking at the existing classics and comparing?
  - B. *Gut feeling*/Feel Good?
  - C. Comparing design philosophies?
4. Is the first, almost un-reflected, impression a strong guide to you or only one of many guides? Meaning: If something really pleases you at first sight do you go to length to try and have it manufactured even if this isn't evident?

1. Redan från början formulerade sig arkitekten/formgivaren med ett språk som fortfarande är giltigt.  
Arkitekten, formgivaren var ofta också konstnär och hade som sådan ett intuitivt förhållningssätt till immateriella egenskaper. Detta tänkande och med kunskap om detta, arbetade han efter att ge formen ett innehåll, ett uttryck som gick över det rent funktionella. Några från 30-talet ser därför fortfarande fräscha ut, och deras arbeten är svårt att datera.
2. Det var just i protesten mot den överbelastade funktionalismen, borgerligheten som man ville angripa och i detta låg säkert ett starkt socialt patos.  
Man kan nämna paret Myrdal, ark. Sven Markelius och i en förlängning Lena Larsson, som ville avdramatisera ett borgerligt tänkande, och fick felaktigt "slita o släng" rykte.
3. Undertecknad har sedan 40-talet haft sin hemvist bland fritt skapande konstnärer.  
Erik och Karin Lundh har vuxit in i detta tänkande, och det präglar deras arbete inom Källemo. Orden "tåla ögats slitage" tillkom när jag var tvungen bemöta och praktiskt taget kriga mot Standardiseringskomiteer men framför allt med Svenska Möbelinstitutet där man tog patent på ordet Kvalitet och stödde detta på de testresultat man ville tvinga alla fabrikanter att genomgå för att få en "kvalitetsstämpel".  
Jag hävdade att all form av tester, slitage, mätbar styrka hos trä eller tyger o.s.v. var mått på kvantitativ bedömning. Om det höll för ögats slitage förkortades vägen till containern och kanske en gång bli framtidens antikviteter. Detta var också av ekologisk, ekonomisk och samhälls- eller betydelse. Detta är KVALITET.  
Efter lanseringen av Jonas Bohlins betongstol, och stor uppmärksamhet och att stolen till och med hamnade i Auktionshusen till höga priser var Institutets saga ute.



3 Den fria konsten är en lärobok, nästan gratis. Men den är en hjälp att upptäcka det som man uppfattar som genuint och en sanning, som man kan tro på får en lång livstid. Funktionalismens företrädare hade en ideologi som var gemensam. Efterkrigstiden med brist på bostäder, och ett bottenlöst behov av bostäder, skapade IKEA och en möbelindustri med omåttlig efterfrågan, där kommersialismen frodades. Miljonprogramsbetongkvarteren hade en politisk, social tanke men baksidan var en sorts immateriell personlig utarmning, som man under de senaste årtiondena nu försöker rätta till.

4. Jag kände en av Sveriges mera berömda konstsamlare. Han berättade att när han b "samla" konst gick han alltid efter ekonomiska. Framtida bedömningar. Det blev i felköp. När han lärt sig mera gick han efter magkänsla, Magkänslan kom naturligt efter en betydande erfarenhet att vara säkrast.

Något av samma sätt att tro på sitt öga, man känner en produkts och formgivares ärlighet, utan kosmetika eller snabba klipp, då kan man vara säker på att man tillf något långsiktigt. När vi har bestämt oss för en produkt, bryr vi oss inte om det omedelbara ekonomiska scenariot. Ett bra föremål vinner i längden. Och framför mår vi bra i företaget, och har det rolig

Och så måste man vara lite galen som John Kandell brukade säga.

Lyska till  
 Petrus Jönsson

XXI  
 20 06  
 III

## Appendix F.

Page 1 (of 2).

### **Definition of terms and expressions as they are used throughout the text.**

*Anthropocentric: a human centred approach to nature, positioning humans' needs above regard to nature and environment.*

*Affectively sustainable: an object or artefact, which retain its significance over time and in changing human contexts.*

*Affective capacity: an objects capacity to bear and transmit meaning.*

*Affective design: design aimed to appeal to the human senses without explicit regard to sustainability but often in current discourse used interchangeably with Emotional design, see below!*

*Classic: an object or artefact, which 1) is done following a strict (classical) pattern or precise (classical) rules 2) has looked the same or has given the same visual impression over a long period of time.*

*Eco-centric: an approach where regards to humans and nature and environment are placed on the same level.*

*Emotional design: design aimed at raising emotion or to prompt an emotional reaction.*

*Feel good: the feeling, which is connected to intuition.*

*Gut Feeling: the popular equivalent to intuition.*

*Human ways of living: an acquired way to act even if not by default reflected. These ways are influenced but not determined by human ways of being and are apt to change.*

*Human ways of being: a given way to react and act, almost always un-reflected and connected to the hierarchy of human needs. These ways adjust rather than change.*

*Immanent product: a product, which looks its function [not only physically].*

*Meta-product: a product where as well the material as the immaterial qualities are considered.*

*Nostalgia: conservation of the past without discrimination.*

*Periodisation: when history is referred to as a series of periods rather than an ongoing process.*

Appendix F.

Page 2.

Presentism: *judging the past by the present.*

Problematisation: *concretisation beyond questioning [the point at issue].*

'Simple': *a 'simple' object is the result of an aim to optimise physical and aesthetic function by design. If a balance between these two functions is not achieved, the aim for simplicity by design may result in an object instead becoming demanding by design, for example by being anonymous, reduced to bare essentials or poor physical function.*

Simplification: *considering affective variables when aiming to design a 'simple' object.*

Time: *1) Period or Era 2) Process*

Tradition: *a handed over experience (not to be confused with nostalgia, habit and routine)*

Traditionality: *development of handed over experiences (dynamic and not to be confused with nostalgia)*

Traditionalism; *ruled by handed over experiences (static and in opposition to new experiences, not to be confused with nostalgia)*

Waste (in general): *1) worn out by physical use 2) technically obsolete 3) culturally irrelevant 4) worn out affectively or with no affective attachment*

Waste (in particular): *unmarketable, not apt for any reuse*