

Topic:

**Social Design Thinking -
Shaping together**

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The work in the context of today's zeitgeist

A personal and scientifically irrelevant introduction

The products of pop culture have always been a good indicator of the basic social mood of a time. If you look at futuristic depictions of the 1950s, you see a bright future. A future consisting of skyscrapers, multi-storey motorways, if not flying cars or space stations. A future that may no longer seem so desirable to us today - but was always bright in its time.

If you look at the basic mood in the mass media these days, the future looks less rosy. Most futuristic blockbusters show us dystopias and all in all, people are more worried than euphoric about the future that has become unpredictable.

Climate change, increasing urbanisation, loneliness of the individual, as well as overpowering technologies, untouchable corporations and the worsening war in the world unsettle people and generally there seems to be a consensus that "something has to be done! "

The exhibition "Victor Papanek: The Politics of Design", which started in 2018 at the Vitra Design Museum, already shows that this urge to become active does not leave the design world untouched. On the contrary, the fact that the Design Museum is digging the ideas of the 70s social design representative out of the mothballs again shows that it is a good idea:

The idea of the designer ¹as society's problem solver is more relevant than ever.

This is nothing new, this consensus has existed within the design community for quite some time. Today, almost every second design concept deals with the topic of sustainability, be it ecological or social.

It is in the context of this general agreement that "designers also have to do something" that the "Beyond Change" conference of the FHNW Academy of Art and Design, which met for three days in Basel in 2018 and asked this relevant question, among others, should be understood:

*"What if design is not the solution, but instead helps to create the problems it is trying to solve? "*²

An important question that made me, the author of this paper, an industrial design student interested in doing good, pause to ask myself how one's actions can do any good at all without doing harm. Since this question takes away any ability to act as long as it is not clarified, I had no choice but to deal with this very question in my bachelor thesis and also in the time before.

¹ In the following work, the masculine form is used exclusively for reasons of better readability. It refers to of course to persons of both genders, as well as to all persons who identify themselves as female and male at the same time or do not identify with any of the gender concepts mentioned.

² cf. Sommerfeld 2018, Form Magazine No.276, p. 24

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0. foreword

The title of this paper reflects a confusion that happened to me and which prompted this investigation. Based on the belief that the approach of designers is capable of solving societal problems, I looked more deeply into design methodology and quite quickly came across 'Design Thinking', which promises just that: designer thinking as a universal solution approach that puts people at the centre of all thought. I then studied the Design Thinking method in more detail during the course of several internships, took part in workshops, assisted them and finally also designed and led them. After my practical investigation of creative work in a corporate context, I have to note that although Design Thinking resembles thinking as I know it from my design studies, it is still very alien to it. Rather, it is a management tool for systematically restructuring companies³ and generating products whose user-centricity is part of their marketing concept.

This text aims to work out the causes of this confusion in order to build on them and come back to the question of how designers can constructively contribute to society.

1. Introduction

Social Design Thinking collides two conceptions of the term 'design', which has meanwhile become so blurred that it is almost no longer noticeable how far apart the intentions behind it actually lie. *Social Design*, on the one hand, is a term that was particularly popular during the time of the global protest movement, such as the counter culture in the US or the civil unrest in Europe after May '68. One of its main proponents – Victor Papanek believed in the abilities of design as a universal approach and called on designers to take on responsibility for social problems.⁴ *Design Thinking*, on the other hand, adorns itself with similar promises. But reality shows that it is primarily a tool of business.

I would like to explore this schizophrenia of the concept of design and explain how the transformation of the design conception took place. The cause of the change will become apparent in the course of my explanation. The initial question that needs to be clarified is the connection between Social Design and Design Thinking. How did it come about that I came across Design Thinking, of all things, when my aim was to help people by design?

The connection lies in the fact that both Social Design and Design Thinking can only be seen as crystallisation points of a much larger transformation process. This is the emergence of a new spirit of capitalism, triggered by the protest movement of the 1960s, as well as the development of a creativity dispositif, i.e. the unquestioned general consensus that creativity is desirable and should be pursued. I would like to take a closer look at these concepts and the course of the transformation process in the following.

³ Brown 2009, blurb

⁴ Papanek 1973, p.19

2. Method

This Bachelor thesis follows an approach that I have acquired in the course of my studies and that has always brought me very good results so far. Starting with a problem, I first abstract it in order to find its cause. Then I try to develop a solution for this core problem. The solution is first subordinated to the claim of solving the problem for myself. From there, I confront my solution with reality in order to learn more about both and then let this experience flow into my solution again as improvements. From this process of constant conceptualisation, verification or falsification, I hope that my solution will be modelled from the complex and incomprehensible states of reality to a form that is actually effective in real terms.

The result of this work is a method that resembles the state of the solution after the first conception and thus represents only an intermediate state of a never-ending process. My practical work is to be understood as a first confrontation of my considerations with reality. I will use the experience gained from this to adapt my initial methodology. Also, the methodology itself is only to be seen as a suggestion for action, which each user should adapt to himself.

In order to find the core of the problem of Design Thinking, I would first like to make it apparent as a purely superficial phenomenon. Starting from this, I will remove layer after layer in the hope of not finally coming across a hollow space. Following the causes and the causes of the causes, I will work out the origin of the problem. Following this, all the phenomena described up to this point will be presented as a consequence of this problem, including Design Thinking. It is clear to me that we live in a complex world in which circumstances change and in which causes are counterrelational and intertwined. For sure the problem of Design Thinking is much more blurred in reality than in my presentation. My work is thus to be understood as a narrative that follows the explanatory models of various reference sources. Since the selection of these sources, which also only represent different perspectives within a large discourse, was made out of personal interest and with the aim of creating argumentative coherence, this work must be read as the expression of a subjective opinion that is based on recognised opinions, in order to remain only one opinion among many.

3. Design Thinking and the emergence of suspicion

Design Thinking - The innovation factory IDEO is repeatedly mentioned as the place where this term originated.⁵ Nowadays it is on everyone's lips. Design Thinking holds out the prospect of new, innovative results for its users that precisely meet their needs.⁶ The methodology sells itself as a designer's way of thinking, systematised, and includes, in addition to a broad set of creativity techniques, some basic principles of the design process. These include, among other things, the encouragement to engage in an experimental and non-linear approach, in which it is also part of the process

⁵ cf. Seitz 2017, p.11

⁶ cf. Brown 2009, p.299 f.

to fail from time to time.⁷ It also relies on an iterative approach with alternating phases of conception and confrontation with reality.⁸ Last but not least, empathy is particularly important in Design Thinking, i.e. the ability to put oneself in the shoes of the respective user.⁹

This idea of playful and experimental development in an interdisciplinary team also aroused my curiosity. Especially since it was brought to me from all sides. But after a year of dealing with the topic, I have to admit that the results are mostly sobering.¹⁰ In my opinion, the strength of the designer lies in the fact that he investigates and abstracts problems in order to deduce the underlying causes, for which he can then develop a solution. In Design Thinking I have experienced that problem analysis plays a not inconsiderable role,¹¹ but it always felt as if it stopped abstracting one step too early. Solutions such as "conserving resources by reducing consumption" or "satisfying needs by reducing one's own demands" never made it to the table. Not to speak of proposals such as "dissolving the company out of the realisation of the harmfulness of its own products". So I asked myself whether I was just unlucky or whether there were fundamental flaws in Design Thinking.

To answer it, one must understand that Design Thinking is merely a surface phenomenon of a currently prevailing condition, which Andreas Reckwitz describes as a *creativity dispositive*.¹²

4. The creativity dispositive and its manifestations

This creativity dispositive can be described in such a way that today we live in a world in which we are not only allowed to be creative, but in which it is even expected of us. Anyone who doesn't want to be creative these days will be met with astonished looks.¹³ People give themselves individuality and taste, design their homes and exteriors according to their own ideas. This is also expressed in the demands we make on our own work.¹⁴ The job should be an expression of one's own personality. One has flexible working hours and movable room layouts. One aims, out of one's own claim to think "outside of the box", to contribute one's part to something really innovative and ideally one has even thought it up oneself. The mantra of the working world is to do what makes you happy. In short, the creativity disposition is expressed, among other things, by the fact that one constantly

⁷ op. cit., p.230

⁸ op. cit., p.16

⁹ op. cit., p.49

¹⁰ three months at a young start-up offering innovation workshops, three months in the creative department of a technology company, followed by six months as a student worker at the latter.

¹¹ cf. Brown 2009, p.236 f.

¹² Reckwitz 2013, p.51

¹³ Reckwitz 2013, p.9 f.

¹⁴ op. cit., p.12

demands something new out of the urge to constantly renew oneself and that this demand is also met by the producers of new things, for which one ultimately also works oneself and thus contributes one's part to creating something new.¹⁵ In a world where the creativity dispositive prevails, the economy is a 'creative economy' within which the creative class stands in as a role model.¹⁶

Design Thinking must therefore be considered against the backdrop of the social condition in which it is embedded, from which it emerged and which is reflected in it. In order to further trace the essence of Design Thinking, one should first understand how the creativity dispositive itself came into being.

5. The protest movement of the 1960s as trigger of the creativity dispositive and selective fulfilment of demands

If you want to know more about the origin of something, you have to look for it in the past. The absence of what we are looking for can be just as revealing as its presence, and so it makes sense to look for the state of simultaneous presence and absence, for the hour of birth.

In the case of the creativity dispositive, various sources indicate that it is the protest movement of the 1960s that can be seen as the trigger for its development.¹⁷ At that time, there was a general mood of departure into a better future. It was above all the younger generations who spoke out¹⁸ against inequality in the world, against oppressive structures and for more freedom of individual self-development, as well as for creativity and peace.¹⁹

It was during this time that the desire for the freedom of the individual and the urge for self-realisation became loud. This was not invented by the protest movement, but it was expressed in it.²⁰ As I will explain in more detail later, today's creativity dispositive came about as a response to these demands. However, this does not answer the question of a corrupting force inherent in Design Thinking. If we look around us today, the demands for individuality and self-development seem to have been fulfilled.²¹ Nevertheless, we still live in a world where wealth inequality still exists and is

¹⁵ op. cit., p.38 ff.

¹⁶ op. cit., p.144 f.

¹⁷ op. cit., p.165 ; cf. also Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p.213

¹⁸ Reckwitz 2013, p.165

¹⁹ op. cit., p.13 f.

²⁰ cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p.80 ff.

²¹ cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.9

growing and ²² where, at the same time, trade unions are increasingly losing strength ²³ and members.²⁴ So it seems that a network of global protest movements in solidarity with each other has turned into a society of individualistic lone wolves. This is interesting because the demands for solidarity ²⁵ and social cohesion as forces against an oppressive system were also part of the protest movement. ²⁶

The question of why the latter demands were not met is of great relevance for the development of a socially oriented design approach. Especially when one considers that Victor Papanek's Social Design approach received great support from the protesting students.²⁷ In order to understand the response to this, however, it is first important to examine the causes for the emergence of the protest movement and the background of its demands.

6. Reasons behind the demands of the protest movement

The demands of the protest movement are to be distinguished. The term *protest movement* is used here to refer to the *1968 movement* in Europe and the *hippie and counter culture movement* in the US. However, it is important to realise that these two descriptions are already nothing more than categorisations. In fact, the protest movement consisted of a multitude of movements and groups that also differed greatly in their demands as well as in their way of expressing them. The exact differentiation between these groups and their specific demands would go beyond the scope of this paper and is probably not even possible.

For the further argumentation, such a fine distinction is also not necessary, since the social change that will be described was primarily triggered by an international common understanding. ²⁸ According to Boltanski and Chiapello, this can be divided into two main thrusts of criticism:

- a) Artist's Critique:²⁹ The awareness of the beautiful and the great is lost through increasing standardisation. The world is becoming disenchanted and there is a loss of authenticity with regard

²² cf. World Inequality Report 2018, p.198

²³ cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p.213 f.

²⁴ cf. Creutzburg 2017, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 29.04.2017 "Less than one in five is a trade unionist".

²⁵ cf. the video contribution "Was there international solidarity among the 68ers? " of the project "Short summer, long effect - a virtual discussion group" by Stephan Trinius 2008, published by the Federal Office for Civic Education,

²⁶ as well as the video contribution "What did the 68ers want? "; also part of the latter project.

²⁷ cf. Clarke 2018, p.36 in the catalogue of the Vitra Design Museum exhibition "Victor Papanek: The Politics of Design".

²⁸ cf. Seitz 2017, p.111 f.

²⁹ cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p.80 ff.

to things, people and feelings. All this results in a loss of purpose. Furthermore, the critics feel restricted in their freedom, autonomy and creativity by the oppressive structures.

- b) **Social Criticism:**³⁰ The poverty of the workers and the unequal distribution of wealth are deplored. Furthermore, the existing structures promote egoism and opportunism. It rewards those who are only interested in themselves and thus demoralises society.

The rise of these criticisms is not surprising in view of the zeitgeist of the 1960s. The trauma of World War II was still in people's minds. Thus, there was a general fear in the Western world of a new strengthening of authoritarian structures. On the other hand, the Cold War was in full swing and people could witness huge amounts of money flowing into the arms race, while awareness grew about global inequality in the course of decolonisation.

The popularity of Richard Buckminster Fuller's book "Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth" can be understood against this background. It pleaded for a sustainable use of resources and for global solidarity, based on the observation that all people are in the same boat, in the same "Spaceship Earth".³¹ Fuller's geodesic dome became a symbol for the utopia of an ecological, community-based lifestyle.³²

At this point, it is important to pause before this digression gets too far lost in the highly complex zeitgeist of the 1960s. A nuanced understanding of this period is not necessary to understand the transformation process that results in today's creativity dispositive, as it is a flattened and one-dimensional form of this zeitgeist that eventually resulted in the general transformation of society. It can be said in advance that in the course of this change, social critique was lost in insignificance, while artist critique as an agent of transformation was endogenised, i.e. internalised and absorbed by the process of restructuring. In the following, some basic characteristics of capitalism will be explained, which are reflected in precisely those oppressive structures. Against this background, the incorporation of artist critique, with the simultaneous invalidation of social critique, becomes comprehensible.

7. Fears of capitalism and its consequences

In order to be able to understand the emergence of the creativity dispositive from here, it is first necessary to explain some peculiarities that are rooted in the nature of capitalism itself and that can be explained by its basic functioning.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *cf.* Fuller 2010, p.119 f.

³² *cf.* Alison J. Clarke's contribution to the catalogue of the exhibition "Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia". entitled "Buckminster Fuller's Reindeer Abattoir and Other Designs for the real World".

Capital, i.e. according to Marx a monetary value that is invested in order to get back a higher sum,³³ has the intrinsic urge to accumulate.³⁴ This urge, which I will call the *accumulation principle* in the following, is rooted in the *realisation problem* of the commodity, with which the capitalist always has to struggle. If he invests in something that he hopes to sell again for a higher monetary value, he always runs the risk that he will no longer be able to sell what he has bought. After all, there are other capitalists who might offer the same thing. Because of this existential fear of the capitalist to end up without remaining capital and with something that he can't use, he tends to accumulate as much capital as possible.³⁵ The reason for this is a second aspect of the accumulation principle, which is that with a larger capital, it is easier to increase it.³⁶ This basic mechanism is ultimately a reason for the urge of companies to monopolise and makes its not insignificant contribution to global inequality. Critics of capitalism therefore note that capitalism seduces people to greed and selfishness, which is also reflected in the social criticism of the protest movement.³⁷

Besides the problem of realisation, it is the *problem of motivation* that causes problems for the capitalist. This is also based on the principle of accumulation and has to do with the relationship between the capitalist and his workers. Since they have little or no capital at their disposal, they are dependent on earning their money through gainful employment. They sell both their time and their labour power to the capitalist, have no claim to ownership of the result of their labour and are instead fobbed off with a wage that does not correspond to the increase in value of the commodity produced by them.³⁸ In a sense, a part of the worker's time and labour power is capitalised and benefits the capitalist as surplus value, as Marx presents in his "Critique of Political Economy".³⁹ For the worker, this relationship is not particularly attractive, but at the same time he is in a sense forced to enter into it, since he has to finance his life. This gives rise to the problem of motivation, because although wages motivate the worker to be present at the workplace, they do not spur him on to work enthusiastically.⁴⁰ Since the worker is alienated from his work,⁴¹ he cannot see any meaning in his actions. In Fordism, attempts were made to solve this problem by extending working hours and compensating this with an increase in wages. In Taylorism, this was achieved by integrating the worker so closely into the machine processes that he had no choice but to keep up with their pace. If he were to pause work, it would affect the entire production line, so he would also be subject to so-

³³ cf. Löw 1989, p. 136

³⁴ cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p.39 f.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *op. cit.*, p.42 f. ; cf. also Löw 1989, p.158

³⁷ cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p.80

³⁸ *op. cit.*, p.42

³⁹ cf. Löw 1989, p.142 f.

⁴⁰ cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p. 42 f.

⁴¹ *op. cit.*, p.216

cial pressure from the other workers. In Taylorism, the production process of a good was broken down into such small steps that the work became monotonous and repetitive. A condition in which the worker is left with no possibility of finding fulfilment in his actions.⁴²

A final problem that stands in the way of absolute capitalism is similar to the motivation problem, but also affects the capitalist himself. It is the *problem of legitimacy*. For even a capitalist must see a meaningfulness in his work.⁴³ Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello note that capitalism always needs something that is already recognised as legitimate outside the economy to base itself on.⁴⁴ This ideology, which both the strong and the weak of capitalism follow, is what Max Weber calls the "spirit of capitalism" and describes it within the framework of Ascetic Protestantism.⁴⁵ According to this, successful economic activity is a sign that God is well-disposed towards one. A system, by the way, in which even successful entrepreneurs did not surrender to decadence but, following the commandment of charity, used their money to help the poor.⁴⁶

All aspects of capitalism mentioned so far, namely the *problem of realisation*, the *problem of motivation* and the *problem of legitimisation*, will be relevant in the following. These mechanisms can be used to understand both the emergence of the protest movement and the development of social design, up to the development of the creativity dispositif and the design thinking that is included in it.

8. The crisis of capitalism and the stagnation of design

Capitalism before the time of the protest movement was in crisis. There was a problem of motivation among the workers and a growing problem of legitimacy.⁴⁷ Attempts were made to exploit the workers' newly won free time to sell them goods they did not need. At the same time, the belief in Christian abstinence still prevailed.⁴⁸ In addition, the growing dissatisfaction with the authoritarian and hierarchical corporate structures made it increasingly costly for the factory operator to maintain product quality in the Taylorist organisation.⁴⁹

⁴² cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p.236

⁴³ op. cit. , p.42; cf. also Seitz 2017, p.120

⁴⁴ op. cit., p.65

⁴⁵ op. cit., p.44 f.

⁴⁶ cf. Parsons 2019, p.80 ff.

⁴⁷ cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p. 44

⁴⁸ op. cit., p.69

⁴⁹ cf. Seitz 2017, p.111 f.; cf. also Boltanski/Chiapello 2006 p.222 ff.

The boom after the Second World War began to level off.⁵⁰ In addition, a standardised product culture prevailed, i.e. specialised factories produced one type of product. The problem with this mode of production is the rapid saturation of the market.⁵¹ A product that does not consume itself and does not become obsolete can only be sold until everyone who wants it has it – the realisation problem.⁵² Bauhaus and HfG Ulm played their part.⁵³ The belief that there was an ideal solution to every design problem led to "timeless" products. This also took the wind out of the sails of industrial design, which had just come from ornamental Art Deco.⁵⁴

The reference to design should not be seen as an interjection at this point, but as a relevant aspect. It will play a significant role in the formation of the creativity dispositive.

9. Protest movement as liberation of design

The circumstances just mentioned led, among other things, to the fact that especially the youth could no longer identify with the values and offers of capitalism. The standardised products led to a uniformity of the consumers,⁵⁵ they all looked the same, wore the same clothes and lived in identically furnished apartments. This is what the protest movement partly rebelled against. As a reaction to this, the *do-it-yourself culture* became very popular.⁵⁶ Shirts were tie-dyed, clothes got self-sewn, furniture was self-built.

This also broke the rigidity into which industrial design had fallen. *Anti-Design* and *Radical Design* provoked and kicked off the reflowering of a diverse and boundless product culture.⁵⁷ This allowed design to have an impact beyond its niche existence of product design. It was no longer just products that were designed, but product arrangements, room atmospheres and finally entire systems.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ cf. Haug 2017, p.68

⁵¹ cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.143

⁵² op. cit., p.37 ff. + p.64

⁵³ cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.190

⁵⁴ op. cit., p.177 ff.

⁵⁵ cf. Seitz 2017, p.107

⁵⁶ cf. Sebastian Hackenschmidt "DIY furniture - design strategies between alternative lifestyles and commodity aesthetics". in the book "Selber machen - Diskurse und Praktiken des 'Do it yourself'" 2017, p.273 f.

⁵⁷ cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.179

⁵⁸ op. cit., p.180 f.

10. The emergence of social design and its representatives

Richard Buckminster Fuller and Victor Papanek should be mentioned in this context. Fuller was particularly popular for his approach of viewing the world as a whole system.⁵⁹ Papanek became the main representative of *Social Design*. His book "Design for the real World"⁶⁰ gained him many followers. According to him, designers have the responsibility to find solutions for the social problems of the world. They should design for minorities and the disadvantaged instead of equipping useless products with purchase arguments in the form of design. He propagated working in an interdisciplinary design team and called this the only meaningful work in an increasingly automated world.⁶¹ In his eyes, all people are designers:⁶²

*"Design is basic to all human activities. The planning and patterning of any act towards a desired, foreseeable end constitutes a design process. Any attempt to separate design, to make it a thing-by-itself, works counter to the inherent value of design as the primary, underlying matrix of life."*⁶³

With this attitude, Papanek contributed to the establishment of a new kind of "integrated design"⁶⁴ that looks beyond the horizon of manifest objects to deal with the design of holistic systems. He also declares the Social Darwinist notion that there is not enough for everyone on earth as outdated.⁶⁵ *"But the fact of matter is that today there is more than enough to go around for everyone if only it is properly planned, distributed, and consumed."*⁶⁶

Last but not least, he complains that industrial design is still in the service of the capitalist profit system and even leads it in some cases.⁶⁷ The design jobs offered by industry and coveted by many students are, according to him, far from serving public interest.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ cf. Fuller 2010, p.45

⁶⁰ Papanek 1973

⁶¹ cf. Papanek 1973, p.321 f.

⁶² op. cit., p.23

⁶³ Papanek 1973, p.320

⁶⁴ ibid.

⁶⁵ cf. Papanek 1973, p.329

⁶⁶ Papanek 1973, p.329

⁶⁷ cf. Papanek 1973, p.331

⁶⁸ op. cit., p.333

Papanek was very well received by the protest movement. His charismatic manner also brought him many listeners and so he contributed to the general recognition of design as a political tool and universal solution.⁶⁹

11. Protest movement as a solution to the problem of realisation

The rise of the protest movement and its demands for personal freedom and individual self-development were like the liberation blow of dull, old, standardised and bureaucratic capitalism. All of a sudden, it could approach consumers as people with taste.⁷⁰ This new form of demand made it possible to sell the same product in different colours and shapes, because from now on consumers identified themselves by their choice of product. The production of constantly changing goods thus replaced standardised mass production.⁷¹

Advertising helped to encourage more and more people to develop a taste in choosing their products. Wolfgang Fritz Haug brings up an example from the textile industry: In 1967, sales in the men's ready-to-wear sector suffered badly from the consequences of weakening economy. As a reaction to this, a massive advertising campaign was launched with the aim of persuading men, who until then had been dressed businesslike and inconspicuously, to buy new suits. The campaign aggressively discredited the hitherto established grey suits, associating them with fatigue, cowardice and unattractiveness. Wearing old suits from the previous season was to become a symbol of weak character. This manipulative mobilisation was immediately joined by the shoe industry, whose advertisements chanted that new shoes had to go with every new suit.⁷²

As a result of this development, a greater variety of products was demanded and at the same time product expiry was accelerated, which counteracted the occurrence of market saturation and thus contributed to the solution of the realisation problem.⁷³

12. The change in social values as a result of the protest

All these factors contributed to the fact that the aesthetic values of a product became increasingly important in the eyes of consumers. A general change in values in society was triggered. Youthful-

⁶⁹ cf. Kries/Klein/Clake 2018 "Victor Papanek. The Politics of Design", p.36 f.

⁷⁰ cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.180

⁷¹ op. cit., p.138

⁷² cf. Haug 2017, p.69 f.

⁷³ op. cit., p.66

ness becomes a generally desirable character trait, as it implies the rejection of the old.⁷⁴ *New* became desirable and the view developed that new is good because it is new.⁷⁵

13. Upsurge of design as a general discipline of the creative industries

From the 1980s onwards, the industry increasingly began to create aesthetic values and emotions, instead of utility values. This can be seen as the final solution to the problem of realisation. Because if the goods bought are only bought as the carriers of emotion and attitude to life,⁷⁶ then saturation can no longer take place, because one cannot be satiated by emotion. In the worst/best case, the stimulus threshold increases, which only results in increased consumption.⁷⁷

In addition, the aesthetic needs of people were recognised by the job market. Work environments were increasingly designed as feel-good atmospheres. In this way, organisational members should be able to identify better with their workplace and gain increased motivation from it.⁷⁸

In this respect, design solves both the realisation and the motivation problem of capitalism by transforming it into *aesthetic capitalism*.⁷⁹ It becomes the exemplary practice for the intelligent design of attractive, affectively satisfying atmospheres and increasingly interlocks with management.

At this point, the concept of design has completely left the sphere of Social Design, if it was ever part of it. This form of design is still oriented towards the needs of people. But it does so for the reason of making both the work in the capitalist enterprise and the consumption of the goods produced by it palatable.⁸⁰

14. Entry of design into management practice

At last, with the establishment of design economics as a management technique, the design view discussed here has completely separated from its roots in Radical- and Social Design. Instead of solving social problems, it solves the problems of bureaucratic capitalism in a corporate context. Moreover, it silences the artist critique for more creativity and self-development by offering the ful-

⁷⁴ op. cit., p.70

⁷⁵ cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.44 ff.

⁷⁶ cf. Haug 2017, p.78 f.

⁷⁷ op. cit., p.86 ff.

⁷⁸ cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.183

⁷⁹ op. cit., p.11

⁸⁰ op. cit., p.187

filment of demands under capitalism. Moreover, it deprives social critique of its ideological basis and allows it to drown in the confusion of a capitalism in new disguise.⁸¹

The management school had also changed in parallel with the unfolding of advertising, fashion and design. It was now assumed that every employee had the urge for individual self-growth and would follow it if given the opportunity.⁸² The practice of design economics fits into this change in management as an ideal complement. It models work into aesthetic work and thus solves the motivation problem of bureaucratic organisation.⁸³ In such a company, the manager acts as a "design manager". He observes social developments and the range of emotions and values of meaning in order to find gaps within them. If he succeeds in doing so, he can initiate the filling of this gap with a precisely fitting product and thus exploit it economically.⁸⁴

This creates a corporate structure that approaches the workers as a cultural entity and within which the individual can develop freely.⁸⁵ People work flexibly, mobilely, in teams on new, emotional, innovative solutions. This is what Boltanski and Chiapello call the "new spirit of capitalism". A new drive, a new motivation has emerged to take part in capitalism.⁸⁶

At the same time, the complete formation of the creativity dispositive is achieved. For the aesthetic capitalist company can only work on the constant production of innovative products as long as these are also demanded by consumers. But since everyone now agrees that the new is desirable for the sake of novelty, the company can also produce new things without having to worry.⁸⁷ The fact that these are often only sham novelties makes sense in the light of W. F. Haug's observation:⁸⁸ „*Schein wird für den Vollzug des Kaufakts so wichtig – und faktisch wichtiger – als Sein.*“⁸⁹ Which states that by now the appearance of something is as important – and in fact more important – for the act of buying, than what this something actually is. The same thing applies in case of the pseudo-creativity of the consumer, who reinvents himself merely by selecting out of a range of finished products.⁹⁰

⁸¹ cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p.380

⁸² cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.184

⁸³ op. cit., p.191

⁸⁴ op. cit., p.188

⁸⁵ op. cit., p.185

⁸⁶ cf. Boltanski/Chiapello 2006, p.43

⁸⁷ cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.40 f.

⁸⁸ op. cit., p.45

⁸⁹ Haug 2017, p.29

⁹⁰ cf. Reckwitz 2013, p.143

15. Design Thinking as the crystallisation point of this development

This state of society is reflected almost model-like in the emergence of the Design Thinking methodology. Demands for creativity and self-development are fulfilled within the framework of capitalist structure.⁹¹ People get to move, they work in teams, play games and tinker, they act and pursue their own curiosity. In this respect, it can be seen as the current climax of fun at work in the company. Moreover, it also finally solves the problem of legitimacy by credibly conveying to the actors that they are working in the interest of the community through the *human-centred* approach.⁹² Thus, Design Thinking can be seen as one of the most distinctive forms of the new spirit of capitalism.

16. Criticism of Design Thinking

Design thinking seems like a promising solution at first glance. Perhaps that is because it promises a lot. Unfortunately, it is not able to keep its promises, as Tim Seitz has worked out in his book "Design Thinking and the New Spirit of Capitalism".⁹³

Because it takes place within the framework of a company, there is both time pressure, which is sold as promoting performance, and pressure to develop results that benefit the company.⁹⁴ This is because time off from work is a form of given trust that comes with the expectation not to abuse or disappoint it. This leads to the fact that the meaningfulness of the concepts cannot be questioned or discussed, or only insufficiently.⁹⁵ The correct execution of the method comes before the quality of the results, which is also expressed in the mantra "*Go for Quantity!*".⁹⁶

The claim of user-centricity primarily serves to help the actors justify their actions to themselves.⁹⁷ In addition, it can be seen as a selling point to the customer, since a user-centred product promises a competitive advantage, as well as savings in marketing, because it will sell itself.⁹⁸

The field research and user surveys have no basis in statistics or sociology. The evaluation is done purely according to the discretion of the actors.⁹⁹ In addition, the real users are simplified into personas, which then replace them. They represent a manifestation of all the aspects that the actors

⁹¹ cf. Seitz 2017, p.113

⁹² op. cit., p.105

⁹³ Seitz 2017

⁹⁴ cf. Seitz 2017, p.45

⁹⁵ cf. Seitz 2017, p.124

⁹⁶ op. cit., p.113 f.

⁹⁷ op. cit., p.125

⁹⁸ op. cit., p.109

⁹⁹ op. cit., p.53

consider to be pleasurable by their products. They also represent a projection surface for all the ideas that the actors have about the user.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, there is always a relationship between "we" and "they". The users themselves do not participate in the design thinking process. They are seen as mere recipients of the product.¹⁰¹

The mantra of empathy embodies the condescending view that one knows what is going on in another person, even if they come from a completely different social environment, if not from a different culture. The actors assume that they know better than the users themselves. It is a form of paternalism.¹⁰²

More than a method for developing effective and human-centred solutions, Design Thinking is the embodiment of the work culture within the new spirit of the capitalism.¹⁰³ The workers voluntarily put themselves under time and performance pressure. The work processes are partly comparable to those of Taylorism.¹⁰⁴ The Design Thinking process resembles a systematised and standardised thinking movement of the designer, divided into smallest steps. Together with the methodology, these form a promising machine into which the actors are inserted as executors of creativity. They are dependent on keeping up with the speed of the machine, due to time pressure, but also due to the social pressure to perform that is built up among the workers. Within the micro-steps of production, they have no opportunity to bring in a way of thinking that questions the methodology. Only the subject matter may be worked on with sticky notes.¹⁰⁵

The role of the authoritarian supervisor is replaced by the methodology which motivates to push one's limits and at the same time takes responsibility for the results. It asks participants to give up responsibility within the space created by the workshop framework.¹⁰⁶

17. Findings on the problem of origin

Design Thinking is not able to solve real social problems because, by its nature, it only sees them as exploitable market gaps. This is because it's embedded in economy and the capitalist structures behind it. By their very nature, these structures promote inequality in the world and reinforce selfish behaviour. They see everything, even the most beautiful and sacred, as a commodity that can be

¹⁰⁰ op. cit., p.67

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² op. cit., p.53 f.

¹⁰³ op. cit., p.124

¹⁰⁴ op. cit., p.120 f.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ cf. Seitz 2017, p.118 f.

turned into capital. The human-centred claim of design thinking can already not be fulfilled for the fact alone that in the eyes of capitalism humans are only a means to an end.¹⁰⁷

The patriarchal view that one knows what is going on in the mind of the other person and what moves them is hidden in the assertion of one's own empathy. Empathy is nothing but a prejudice. It has its right to exist, but it can never replace a real dialogue. Even after such a dialogue, a measure of incomprehension will remain. The accusation of patriarchal action have also been held at Victor Papanek and his *Designs for the Third World*.¹⁰⁸ He reflects on this in the second edition of *Design for the real World*. Now Design Thinking is committing the same mistakes again.

In the course of the explanations up to this point, it has been worked out that the Design Thinking methodology is no more than a surface manifestation of a change that has taken place in the spirit of capitalism. It is representative of a new work culture in which workers are no longer exploited, but in which they exploit themselves. Moreover, the demands of the protest movement have only been met seemingly and not completely either. What aesthetic capitalism offers us is creativity, individuality and self-development within the framework of work and consumption. This has allowed it to silence the demands and take the wind out of the protest movement's sails. Moreover, capitalism has only reacted to their critique of artists, but not the social critique. This was dropped under the table and only now brought up again as a sham legitimisation to equate acting in the spirit of capitalism with acting for the community.

18. Conclusion of the theoretical study

This also clarifies the initial question of this study. The values that the modern do-gooder stands for are the same as those that Design Thinking adorns itself with. This is no coincidence, but the result of the increasing establishment of these values in society as a whole as a consequence of the demands of the 1960s protest movement. These values and demands reflect a critique of capitalism that has been the same for almost two centuries. The reason for the confusion formulated at the beginning is the endogenisation of this critique by capitalism itself, i.e. the demands are fulfilled in capitalism, even if unfortunately only partially and seemingly.

The criticisms of Design Thinking are symptomatic of a new culture that is currently still in its infancy and is likely to become even more established. It is a culture in which workers self-exploit in order to turn innovative solutions to made up problems into marketable products. It is a culture which believes that every problem in the world can be solved by consuming the right product and in which progress and growth are still seen as the ultimate solution to everything. The modern individual identifies himself through his work, measures his self-worth by it and willingly neglects weekends and after-work hours. All the achievements that the trade unions fought for in the course of the '68 protests are thus being undone, while these very unions are increasingly losing their strength.

¹⁰⁷ cf. Haug 2017, p.74

¹⁰⁸ cf. Kries/Klein/Clake 2018 "Victor Papanek. The Politics of Design", p. 17

To put it briefly: We live in a world where people find identity and self-fulfillment in work and in consumption. This continues to fuel a capitalism that has always driven inequality in the world, while the freedoms and securities of the workers are increasingly diminished.

19. Foundations of Social Design Thinking

These claims are taken up pathetically in the following *Social Design Thinking Manifesto*, summarised and translated into recommendations for action that are radically opposed to Design Thinking methodology. The result is deliberately not a clear "step-by-step" instruction. The manifesto remains abstract and thus calls for the development of a self-responsible thinking movement that is diametrically opposed to the relinquishment of responsibility in Design Thinking.

The central demand of the manifesto is that for *emancipation in the social body*. This is understood as a solution to the problem of the creative class: they strive for self-realisation and meaning in life by developing products in the service of society. To achieve this, they work above average hours, for poor pay, and in addition have hardly any capacity for their social environment or social engagement.

Emancipation in the social body offers a solution to this dilemma. By freeing oneself from the compulsions of consumption, one also frees oneself from the compulsion of work. This can be achieved by drawing on the potential that exists in one's own social environment to satisfy one's own needs. One takes what one's own living environment has to give anyway. Be it food that is thrown away, materials that are no longer needed, tools that can be borrowed or empty premises. If you invest a little in mobilising this potential for yourself, freeing yourself from the 30-40 hour week creates a huge amount of free space. You can then use this to pursue your own interests. To realise oneself, to make one's contribution to society and thus to lead a more meaningful life.¹⁰⁹

Emancipation in the social sphere also results in the claim that as a designer, one should be directly involved in the social fabric in which one is embedded, i.e. in one's local living environment. It is a dynamic of taking and giving. The designer secures his existence through the help of his fellow human beings. To do this, he uses the space he has gained to help them externalise their own image. This also reflects the rejection of the arrogance of "designing for strangers" that is prevalent in Design Thinking. Every person has had different experiences in their life. So everyone sees the world differently and has different expectations of it. This is true for people from other cultures, but also for people within a local community. You can only learn more about the ideas of the other person if they explain and show you the world from their perspective. Only through dialogue can mutual understanding develop. An idea can best be explained and discussed if it can be experienced. In this way, complex world views and desires can be brought closer to reality by transforming representative things, spaces or situations from this desired world into real manifestations. A nudist beach, for example, can be a space and situation where aspects of gender equality can be experienced. In this way, the designer should encourage the members of his living environment to ex-

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Beuys in an interview with Hermann Schreiber 1980, 42. min.

ternalise their ideas in a way that can be experienced and support them in doing so. This way, a strong community can develop between fellow human beings. Because a community requires mutual understanding and this can only come about if everyone expresses their perspective.

The immediate realisation of the respective idea, as an intervention in the shared living environment, provokes dialogue with the inhabitants of this local space. This dialogue directly clarifies whether they can identify with this image. If not, it stimulates them to provide a counter design. At the same time, it is another act of emancipation of the individual through readiness for interpersonal exchange. One does not make the blanket assumption that one's own design is undesirable, but lives it out first. If there is a collision with the ideas of fellow human beings, one can come to terms with them. Standards, laws and norms partly draw boundaries where they wouldn't be necessary. They replace communication and make it possible to coexist smoothly. Through a lively exchange with the community, the normative illusory boundaries can be overcome. Through the willingness to engage in dialogue, the free space of each individual can be maximised. The prerequisite for this is the ability to think and act on one's own responsibility, as well as the courage for civil disobedience. The result is the liberation of the individual in the community, the synthesis of artist and social critique - emancipation in the social body.

The community gains its strength through the willingness of its members to communicate and in return offers them meaning, security, freedom for individuality, creativity and self-development. This is the goal of my Social Design Thinking approach. It is social in that it places the interpersonal at the centre of all actions and sees in it the solution to all problems.

Accordingly, the Social Design Thinking method suggests to become a designer for the direct action-based dialogue within the social fabric in which one itself is also embedded. The shared living conditions should take the most satisfying form by each of the individuals living in them changing them according to their own ideas and thus entering into an immediate exchange with their fellow human beings.

The designer should initiate this process by creating a space that encourages his fellow human beings to reflect on their idea of living conditions. Furthermore, he should encourage them to make these ideas tangible. He should support them in this, promote dialogue among people and help them to come to terms with each other. He should exemplify responsible thinking and acting, make his own ideas tangible and thus encourage his fellow human beings to do the same.

The practical part of this bachelor thesis is to be seen as an experiment in which these recommendations for action are put to test.

Social Design Thinking Manifesto

Something has to change! The demands for humaneness, that were already raised 60 years ago have still not been fulfilled.

They are the demands for boundless creativity, for freedom of self-development and for a meaningful life.

They are demands against the capitalist system, which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer.

It rewards those who think only of themselves, promotes a culture of exploitation and while demoralising society.

The demands were not met, but internalised and instrumentalised by that same capitalism. A new spirit of capitalism has emerged.

A spirit that drives people anew to participate in the capitalist system.

It offers creativity in work and consumption.

It offers self-realisation through work and consumption.

It offers meaning to life in work and consumption.

Thus, the new spirit of capitalism silences the critics. It gives the appearance that their demands have been met. In this way, it leads workers to find the meaning of their lives in work and to realise themselves in it.

All ahead of them are the members of the creative class who, with their zeal for work, serve as role models in today's capitalism. In the fire of their self-realisation, they forget about the end of the working day, the weekend and everything that the trade unions have fought hard for.

Chronically underpaid, they work on holidays and sick days.

What drives them is the belief that every problem of humanity can be solved through a product or service. For them, work is not only self-fulfilment but also a service to society. Under the mantra of empathy and user-centricity, they look for problems in other people's lives and design goods for them to buy. They think up products that the users themselves did not know about, that they need them.

Needs are invented and dependencies created.

Dependence on consumable goods.

**Dependence on consumption and
dependence on gainful employment.**

**Thus, the creative class relentlessly contributes to a capitalism,
which continues to drive inequality around the world,
while consuming limited resources available to humanity,
ever more effectively.**

**The creative class really wants to help, but only exploits itself in the
process. Ironically, this also leaves them with even less time to
dedicate themselves to the people who are close to them.**

**Self-fulfilment in work for society gets priority and is placed above fri-
endship, family and relationships. This must end!**

I call for emancipation in the social body:

The synthesis of individualism and community thinking.

More freedom through the rejection of consumption constraints.

More freedom through help from the community.

This creates a social potential of 30 hours per week.

More time and energy for supporting one's fellow human beings.

More time and energy for strengthening the community.

The designer is at the service of his fellow human beings.

His strength lies in his ability to make ideas understandable.

Thus, the designer has two tasks in society:

- 1. The creation of spaces that encourage reflection and
that promote exchange among people.**
- 2. Supporting fellow human beings in communicating their respective
conception of shared living conditions.**

Only through mutual understanding can community develop.

The strong community is the most powerful weapon against oppression.

It is time to channel all efforts directly towards this!

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I would also like to thank all the thought leaders whose ideas and concepts enabled me to develop my own point of view. I would like to mention the collective Assemble, whose project *Granby Workshop* is an exemplary demonstration of how designers can support people in making their ideas of better living conditions tangible.

Likewise Van Bo Le-Mentzel, whose ideas inspired me to create a greater free space for myself through a reduced-possession lifestyle. The concept of making the urban space your own living room and seeing it as a living space rather than a thoroughfare plays an important role in the implementation of my practical experiment. So does the idea of embedding oneself more in the social fabric in order to draw strength from it. I have taken the mantra *constructing instead of consuming* to heart.¹¹⁰ Those who construct, i.e. build themselves, can regain an appreciation for objects and materials that has been lost to us in times of mass production and cheap finished products. In my eyes, this appreciation is an important step towards the responsible use of resources. For my project, I took Le-Mentzel's approach a step further and used only waste materials for construction, because for me, procuring materials from the DIY store is also a form of consumption and use of resources. It is precisely all the waste that people should value anew.

Not forgetting the Tiny House *Wohnmaschine* designed by Le-Mentzel, which served as a great platform for me to carry out my practical work. The concepts reflected in the 15 square metre version of the iconic Gropius building have been a hook and starting point for me to engage in conversation with a variety and diversity of people. So I also have to thank the Staatliches Bauhaus here, and not just because it is happily celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, 2019, and thus gave the initial impetus for the Wohnmaschine project. Rather, it is generally important to acknowledge the impression it has left on the general understanding of design to this day. The Bauhaus philosophy of bringing the inner essence of things to the outside, not concealing it but making it visible and thereby showing its beauty, has had a lasting influence on my self-image as a designer. My practical work therefore places less emphasis on the beauty of the manifest surface, but rather seeks beauty in the intention, the execution and the effect of the design process.

I should also mention Asger Jorn, whose idea of the *Imaginist Bauhaus* sharpened my understanding of the Bauhaus philosophy, whose demands for the emancipation of art, hardly play a role in today's discourse, as they are outshone by the functionalist demands.¹¹¹

I also have to thank Guy Debord as an important representative of the *Situationist International*, in whose founding Jorn was also involved. Their techniques for dissolving art in everyday life have had a significant influence on my own work.¹¹² The perception of situations became an important tool for analysing my living space, as did the aimless wandering (*dérive*) propagated by the Situationists, which inspired me to carry out city walks, with the help of which I examined my own living space in the course of my project. The imaginary map on which I recorded the findings of my investigation is based on the *psychogeographies* that the Situationists used to analyse urban space.

¹¹⁰ cf. Le-Mentzel 2012

¹¹¹ cf. Jorn 1990, p.33 ff.

¹¹² The Situationists pleaded for the liberation of art from its niche existence in museums and galleries. They sought the Art in the context of everyday life. To this end, the members of the movement, mainly based in Paris, wandered through the city and examined the urban spaces for their emotional, affective saturation in order to redesign them if necessary. cf. Debord 1980

The situationist techniques helped me to gain a better understanding of my own living environment and to identify its potentials and deficits.

I would like to thank Friedensreich Hundertwasser, with whose *Verschimmelungsmanifest gegen den Rationalismus in der Architektur*¹¹³ I agree on every point and which gives me the feeling that I am not alone in my views. Rationalism in architecture and, in my opinion, also in design, suppresses the creative self-development of the individual. Urban space is characterised by an infatuation with security and protected by bureaucratic structures that stifle any desire for change in a lengthy process. Under these circumstances, the citizen's ability to take responsibility for his or her own actions degenerates. That is why in my practical work I plead for immediate and self-responsible change of the living space and for the reclamation of individual freedom through civil disobedience.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Joseph Beuys, whose concept of *social sculpture* has had perhaps the most profound influence on my work. The artwork *7000 Eichen*, which he created for Documenta Kassel¹¹⁴, inspired me to also initiate a social dynamic in which people actively change their environment. According to Beuys, every human being has the ability to shape individual living conditions according to his or her own ideas. Thus, every human being also shares responsibility for his or her own fate and for the fate of humanity. A circumstance that, in my eyes, forms the basis of all democratic thinking and action.

Finally, my greatest thanks must go to my parents. They raised me free of any existential fears and thus allowed me to develop a post-materialist worldview, without which this work could never have come about.

•

*"If there were fewer moralists fighting to make the world a better place
and more nurserymen tilling their gardens in peace,
would it not only be better about their gardens,
but perhaps also for the betterment of the world?" 115*

¹¹³ Hundertwasser *Rainy Day Dark Coloured* 1958

¹¹⁴ During Documenta 7 and Documenta 8, Beuys, with the help of volunteers, planted 7000 oak trees in the city of Kassel. Social sculpture is to be understood as an idea that transcends time, people and living space, that is artist is merely set in motion and from then on unfolds a momentum of its own that is only partially predictable. Supervised was the project by the *Organisation for Direct Democracy through Referendum*, which also goes back to Beuys. cf. *Richard Demarco interviews Joseph Beuys in Beuys 7000 Eichen* ed. by Groener/ Kandler 1987, p.15 ff.

¹¹⁵ Quote from Günter Wohlfahrt, from his introduction to the book *Zhuangzi* 2003, p.17

Affidavit

I hereby affirm in lieu of an oath that this thesis was written by me independently, without any outside help. Verbatim and analogous quotations are marked as such and no aids were used that are not listed.

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