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## **The Transformation of Societies in the Mirror of an Expanded Concept of 'Design'**

### **1. Staging Culture (Kulturinszenierungen) as Design Processes – Towards an Expanded Concept Of 'Design'**

Human beings are semiotic creatures, design creatures. Seen from a socio-anthropological perspective, their survival is bound to behaviour that leaves behind traces and makes communication possible. Social systems are semiotic systems that survive by virtue of the recognisability and re-recognisability of their codified ideologies and interests. The durability of this system operates via semiotic identifications and image identifications that generate exchange language, i.e. a symbolic exchange. Deviations in system codification will inevitably lead to loss of system ID – and thus to an exclusion from the system. At the same time, however, each exclusion from a system opens up opportunities to establish new linguistic systems based on the modified codes and to develop new connections to other linguistic or semiotic systems. For individual entities as well as social systems, semiotic codification is a condition of survival.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1908, Georg Simmel designed a sociology of forms in his book *Sociology – Inquiries Into the Construction of Social Forms*.<sup>2</sup> Its fourth chapter, entitled 'Conflict', went on to become a key text in conflict sociology, and a section of its ninth chapter, entitled '*Excursus On the Stranger*', is now a classic text in migration sociology.

In the context of social action and in times of radical change of social and individual identifications, it is more necessary and pressing than ever to study cultural techniques of the semiotic and sociological, of the performative and the scenic, as well as to develop and mobilise an *expanded* concept of design.

Here, the focus will be on a concept of 'design' that can be thought beyond pragmatic notions of consumerist functionality as it has established itself since the 1950s in Europe in relation to the automotive industry, Bauhaus, and the consumer products that emerged during the economic boom. As a result, 'design' is most commonly understood as either the stylisation, labelling, placarding, and advertising of goods in the interest of their commercial distribution, or as the production (individual, serial, or en masse) of household objects, mainly of furniture, household appliances, automobiles, and communication tools, or as fashion and lifestyle, in the context of the medialisation of public space. It is necessary to open up this narrow understanding of design, which corresponds both to a 'common sense' of a

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Yana Milev, *Emergency Design – Anthropotechniken des Überlebens* [Emergency Design – Anthropotechnologies of Survival], Berlin: Merve 2011 [in German]

<sup>2</sup> Georg Simmel, *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms*, Leiden: Brill 2009

society based on commodities and services as well as the usual type of mediation of the term by academic scholarship. It is necessary to open up this limited understanding of 'design' and to motivate a *design thinking* that is pertinent to the social, political, ethnographic, ecological, economic, urban, and spatial, as well as of the aesthetic, mediated, narrative, and performative aspects of *Lebensraum*. The present thesis, therefore, takes on the task of analysing and describing the staging(s) of culture (*Kulturinszenierungen*) seen as design processes.

## **2. Segno – the Historical and Phenomenological Root of the Concept Of 'Design'**

In the late seventeenth century, the French word *dessin* was adopted into German, where it prevailed as *dessein* until the early nineteenth century. Unlike the French *dessin*, denoting image, drawing, or motif (especially in relation to textiles), the German *dessein* became a term denoting constructive purpose and intention tied to a process of coordination and planning. Both the French prototype *dessin* and the German *dessein* are loaned from their Italian precursor *disegno*, which at least during the Renaissance designated a divine plan, a divine idea. *Disegno*, in turn, is a stylistic and conceptual variation of the Italian word *segno*, which stands for the sign and its layers of meaning (semantics), for the signature (digital signature) as stand-in for identity, or for the symbol, which can refer to social class and origin, in the form of a coat of arms for example. Since the mid-eighteenth century already, opinions were split in regards to a potential concept of 'design'. In German-speaking countries, the tendency was to think in terms of process engineering and engineering, i.e. that the concept of design that became prevalent and commonplace in the twentieth century was one situated in the functional space of technology and (industrial) modelling of form. In the English-speaking world, the cradle of the Industrial Revolution, the concept of design had become tied to the functional area of finance and the markets. The design movement that coalesced around R. Buckminster Fuller<sup>3</sup> in the early twentieth century in the US focused on an all-encompassing design of life and society, i.e. a design incorporating the totality of habitats, urbanism, society, technology, physical culture, and creativity. The 'comprehensive designer'<sup>4</sup> directly defined by Buckminster Fuller in 1949 is the godfather of the think-tank movement, of human-centred design, and of the creative industries. Here, we can detect the circular logic of comprehensive design on the one hand, running into the Bauhaus movement and German *Werkbund* (German Association of Craftsmen: a German association of craftsmen, engineers, architects, and industrialists founded in 1907) on the other, a logic that favours the credo 'form follows function' in all purpose-oriented, material-oriented, and product-oriented areas of life.

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<sup>3</sup> R. Buckminster Fuller was first trained as a mechanical engineer

<sup>4</sup> R. Buckminster Fuller, *Your Private Sky*. Discourse, Eds. V Joachim Krausse and Claude Lichtenstein, Baden: Lars Müller Publishers and Museum of Design Zurich 2001, pp 258

This brief introduction to the cultural history of the concept of 'design'<sup>5</sup> simultaneously outlines its geopolitical mentality: the Italian word *segno* – related to the Greek word *sema* and the Latin word *signum* – turns into the concept of fine arts (*disegno*) in the Italian Renaissance, into the concept of couture (*dessin*) in France, into the concept of the engineers movement and of designing (*dessein*) in Germany, into the concept of industrial production and the (financial) markets ('market design') in England. Last but not least, in the United States, it turned into the concept of a technological world and society design ('comprehensive design'). Additionally, it must be noted that in the German-speaking world, the term 'design' only started taking hold in expert circles after the Second World War and did not become popular until the 1960s. The introduction of the concept can be partly attributed to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (in 1930) and partly to Mart Stam (in 1949). In fact, professions that have lately positioned themselves within the field of design had, until the 1950s, been grouped in other professional categories. Back then; today's industrial designers, for example, were called 'engineers', 'draftsmen' or 'architects'. The morphogenetic aspect of applied art, characteristic of the arts and crafts, has since fused with the technologies of drafting and constructing, along with typography and functional object photography. In doing so, it has lifted the hitherto held paradigm of engineering achievement to a new level – that of industrial morphogenesis, also known as *industrial design*.

Thus, since the Renaissance – and especially in the wake of early capitalism, and subsequently full-blown capitalism – the term has systematically emancipated itself from its original etymological and phenomenological meaning. Despite the efforts of Design Research and Design Science, the consequences of this are omnipresent: the inflation of design in the universes of commodities and merchandise imbued with enormous ideological camouflage and sociological erosion.

The present examination aims to address not only this gap but also the consequences of a circulating, market-oriented notion of 'design', in opening up a new approach to the origins of the idea of 'design' that also allows for a new positioning thereof. The Greek precursors of the Italian *segno*, such as *semeion* (σημεῖον) and *semainein* (σημαίνειν), refer to the affiliated sciences of *semeiotik*, as Charles Sanders Peirce called them in keeping with the original meaning. In this respect, the refocused access to the subject matter discussed is linguistic, philosophical, psychological, sociological, ethnographic, and anthropological in nature.

The exploration of an elementary understanding of design as a mode of cultural production, as it is manifested in signature, trace, script, the naming of existentialia such as being (*Sein*) and existence (*Dasein*), and in (survival)

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<sup>5</sup> Yana Milev, 'AlleZ! Dessin\*: Aufräumung einer Begriffsinflation und Systematisierung gegenwärtiger Tendenzen der Designforschung (Bausteine für eine Designanthropologie)' [AlleZ! Dessin\*: Tidying Up the Inflation of a Concept and Systematisation of Current Trends in Design Research (Building Blocks for a Design Anthropology)], *Revue für Postheroisches Management* [Journal of Postheroic Management], Stiftung Management Zentrum –X, Heidelberg: Carl Auer Verlag 2011 [in German]

signal or in identification categories such as 'I', person, name, voice – to which, in turn, symbols and myths are anchored – is driven by the protagonists of semiotic, sociological, and anthropological culture (technology), or culture research such as Umberto Eco,<sup>6</sup> Jacques Derrida,<sup>7</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure,<sup>8</sup> Walter Benjamin,<sup>9</sup> Roland Barthes,<sup>10</sup> Jean Baudrillard,<sup>11</sup> Clifford Geertz,<sup>12</sup> Émile Durkheim,<sup>13</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss,<sup>14</sup> Michel de Certeau,<sup>15</sup> or by the protagonists of more recent scholarship, such as Roland Posner<sup>16</sup> or Aleida Assmann,<sup>17</sup> to name just a few. This essay, therefore, examines the manufactured nature of narratives and orders, of situations and of everyday life, of histories and archives – the semiotics and semantics of (self) description and of the external interpretation of systems.

In his essay 'The Visibility of Social Systems – On the Visuality of Descriptions of Self and Other',<sup>18</sup> the Swiss sociologist Urs Stäheli points to the decisive role of visual semantics in the self-descriptions and external descriptions of functional systems while on the other hand noting a neglect of this role within academic research. The declared aim of the present essay is precisely to address this missing link and to answer with a proposal for an anthropological and sociological concept of 'design'. Cultures that move and organise themselves in linguistic operations, whose key elements in assigning origin and affiliation are signature, writing, trace, symbol, gesture, smell, and image must be recognised as design cultures. Based on Joseph Beuys' *expanded concept of art*, an expanded concept of design is to be drafted here and tested for its capacity to connect to the sub-disciplines of (empirical) cultural studies.

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<sup>6</sup> Umberto Eco, Zeichen. Einführung in einen Begriff und seine Geschichte [Sign – Introduction to a Concept and its History], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1977 [in German]

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, University of Chicago Press 1978 and id., The Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs, Northwestern University Press 1973

<sup>8</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, Linguistik und Semiotik. Notizen aus dem Nachlass. Texte, Briefe und Dokumente [Linguistics and Semiotics. Notes From the Estate. Texts, Letters and Documents], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2003 [in German]

<sup>9</sup> Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project, Belknap Press 2002

<sup>10</sup> Roland Barthes, Mythologies, Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1972

<sup>11</sup> Jean Baudrillard, Symbolic Exchange and Death (Theory, Culture and Society), Sage Publications 1993

<sup>12</sup> Clifford Geertz, Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture: Selected Essays, New-York/N.Y./USA: Basic Books 1973

<sup>13</sup> Émile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Free Press 1965

<sup>14</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, Das Ende des Totemismus [The End of Totemism], Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1965 [in German]

<sup>15</sup> Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, University of California Press 1984

<sup>16</sup> Roland Posner, Klaus Robering, Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.), Semiotik. Ein Handbuch zu den zeichentheoretischen Grundlagen von Natur und Kultur [Semiotics: A Handbook on the Semio-Theoretical Foundations of Nature and Culture] Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter 2004 [in German]

<sup>17</sup> Aleida Assmann, Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses, [Spaces of Memory – Forms and Transformations of Cultural Memory], Munich: Fink 2009 [in German]

<sup>18</sup> Urs Stäheli, 'Die Sichtbarkeit sozialer Systeme. Zur Visualität von Selbst- und Fremdbeschreibungen' [The Visibility of Social Systems – On Visuality of Self and Descriptions], Soziale Systeme. Zeitschrift für soziologische Theorie [Social Systems. Journal of Sociological Theory], Jg. 13, 2007, H. 1/ 2, S. 70, vol. 13, 2007, H. 1/2, p.70 [in German]

In summary, the concordance in an anthropological-sociological thinking in the context of *Gestalt* must be pointed out, as seen in Giorgio Agamben's *Signatura Rerum*,<sup>19</sup> in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *On Several Regimes of Signs*,<sup>20</sup> in Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*<sup>21</sup> or in Umberto Eco's *Segno*. This concordance can be found in the following two theses: first, all things are always either beholden to a sign or exist in the sign of something that manifests and discloses their invisible properties. Secondly, a sign always refers to another sign, as it crosses over into the other sign, which it (as sign-within-a-sign) carries it onwards to other signs. *Segno* is the basic element of linguistic codification and the basis of linguistic exchange, and, as such, of culture, i.e. production of meaning per se. The ways in which codification and exchange lead to processes that produce culture and to cultural formations has been adequately described in the disciplines of semiotics, anthropology, and sociology.

Aptly, Clifford Geertz speaks of culture as a dense web that is constantly in production and flux, with a steadily shifting meaning. Geertz also speaks of the codes that govern such a web, and how their symbolic content must be re-decoded anew over and over again. He identifies linguistic coding and linguistic exchange as design operators of cultures. In addition to Geertz' concept of *thick description*,<sup>22</sup> there are several other prominent theories that can be mobilised in the service of constituting an anthropological concept of design: Umberto Eco's remarks on *segno*, Pierre Bourdieu's *The Economy of Linguistic Exchanges*,<sup>23</sup> Judith Butler's<sup>24</sup> and John Langshaw Austin's<sup>25</sup> speech-act theory, Erika Fischer-Lichte's theory of performance,<sup>26</sup> or Michel de Certeau's theory of action.<sup>27</sup> How exactly codification and exchange lead to processes that produce meaning and fields of meaning is, in turn, a task for philosophy and psychology to elucidate. For example, for the French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Jacques Lacan, linguistic links are *signifying chains* that motivate the emergence of 'I' as a figure of identification.

The concepts *der Gestalt(ung)* (shape and shaping), *der Form(gebung)* (form and morphogenesis) or *des Ausdrucks* (expression) are all directly related to the concept of *sign* and have always been objects of research immanent to philosophy and aesthetics. Just think of the concept of *expression* in Maurice

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<sup>19</sup> Giorgio Agamben. *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, New York: Zone, 2009

<sup>20</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 'On Several Regimes of Signs' in: id, *A Thousand Plateaus – Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota 1987

<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Vintage 1982

<sup>22</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Thick Description – Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture: Selected Essays*, New-York/N.Y./USA, Basic Books 1973

<sup>23</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power – The Economy of Linguistic Exchanges*, Cambridge: Polity in Association with Basil Blackwell, 1991

<sup>24</sup> Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, New York: Routledge 1997

<sup>25</sup> J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, London: Oxford UP 1976

<sup>26</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, New York: Routledge 2008

<sup>27</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press 1984

Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology*<sup>28</sup> or, in philosophical anthropology, of Helmuth Plessner's concept of *expression*, of Gabriel Tarde's concept of *imitation*, or the concept of *gestural signals* in behavioural sciences, as well as of Ernst Cassirer's concept of *symbolic forms*, or to the concept of *form* in Roland Barthes. This concept of *design* could be captured much more adequately with the words *figure (Gebilde)*, *aggregate/aggregation*, or *dispositif*, as it manifests itself in complex ways whenever people speak languages, build their habitats, and tend to their fields. Craftsmanship follows the craft of language, the achievement of orientation, interpretation, and mediation, through which cultures eventually secure their phalanges, demarcations, and reproductions. It is here that an expanded concept of 'design' points to its most radical form of rewriting, through its connecting to *techné*, i.e. techniques of culture understood as anthropotechnologies, mediated via *artificiality*, the varieties of speech, and symbolic exchange.

### 3. Cultural Anthropological and Social Anthropological Expansion of the Concept of Design

#### 3.1. Positioning

In the meantime, Design Research – scientific design theory and the study thereof – has stood its ground and established itself in the academy, so that Design Science can now lay claim to academic leadership, and even monopolise it. This calls for critical caution, given the synchronicity between Design Science and the industrial turn of universities (as seen, for example, in the reforms of the Bologna Process). Simply consider the widely known fact that research funds for academic R&D projects have increasingly tended to be launched by the industry.

It is precisely because design science positions itself so ideally within the industry's interface that it is primarily practice-oriented, as a consequence of its theoretical formation and mediation. This is always synonymous with the market-oriented, the politically uncritical, and underexposure in terms of social, political and humanist engagements and studies. These circumstances lead to serious differences in terms of the understanding, phenomenon, and role of 'design', in both social as well as academic contexts. A central concern of anthropological design research<sup>29</sup> is to clearly reveal these differences: in research, theory, and practice, the concept of design is more than the way in which it is being mobilised by economically powerful think tanks (e.g. Ideo, SAP, Google, Apple, Telecom, Samsung Electronics, etc.), it is more than its mining as *usability research* in the industry's research departments and institutes – and it is also more than what the strand of research based in

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<sup>28</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Body as Expression and Speech', in: id, *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge, 2012

<sup>29</sup> Yana Milev (ed.), *D.A. – A Transdisciplinary Handbook of Design Anthropology*, Bern/Berlin/Frankfurt/Brussels/Oxford/Wien/New York: Peter Lang Academic Publishers 2013

technology and economics understands it to be, as suggested in the context of Design Science in theory and practice.

A complementary expansion of the concept of design will only be possible by transcending these shortcomings and linking to the fields of research of critical theory and political theory as well as qualitative research.

### 3.2. Design Criticism

The 1960s already saw the rise of a strand of design criticism that even came from the ranks of the design offices themselves, such as the *anti-design* movement, initiated by Ettore Sottsass and the studios Alchimia and Memphis, born out of the dissident Italian anti-design movement *Radical Design*. Furthermore, political theory and sociology also produced voices critical of design, developed as a critique of consumerism by the vanguard thinkers of the Frankfurt School around Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, as well as through Karl Marx's critique of commodity fetishism.<sup>30</sup> Further articulations of design criticism can be found in Antonio Gramsci's art criticism,<sup>31</sup> which in turn became a key foundational work for the theories of Wolfgang Fritz Haug (*Critique of Commodity Aesthetics*),<sup>32</sup> Chantal Mouffe, Oliver Marchart (*Society on Stage*), as well as for the workerist movement (*operaismo*), for example in Antonio Negri's concept of the *multitude*,<sup>33</sup> or Franco Berardi's *semio-capitalism*.<sup>34</sup> Pierre Bourdieu<sup>35</sup> paved the way for a further line of critique of capitalism and design for an entire generation of sociologists such as Eve Chiapello and Luc Boltanski.<sup>36</sup> Vilém Flusser<sup>37</sup> or Jean Baudrillard's *Kool Killer or The Insurrection of Signs*<sup>38</sup> are significant critics of design from the perspective of critical theory and philosophy, rooted, in turn, in Situationism and its main representative Guy Debord with his *Society of the Spectacle*.<sup>39</sup> On the US-American journalistic, sociological, and anti-capitalist front, the prominent protagonists of design

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<sup>30</sup> Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, 'The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof', in: Capital – A Critique of Political Economy, Vol.III, Penguin Classics 1993

<sup>31</sup> Wolfgang Fritz Haug, 'Antonio Gramsci's Art Criticism', in: id, Gramsci und die Politik des Kulturellen [Gramsci and the Policy of Cultural], Online-PDF: <http://www.wolfgangfritzhaug.inkrit.de/documents/GR-PolKult-X.pdf> [date of access 24 June 2013]

<sup>32</sup> Wolfgang Fritz Haug, Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality, and Advertising in Capitalist Society, Followed by Commodity Aesthetics in High-Tech Capitalism, University of Minnesota Press 1986

<sup>33</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire. New York: Penguin, 2004

<sup>34</sup> Franco Berardi, Precarios Rhapsody – Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation, London: Minor Compositions 2009; Franco Berardi, 'Aesthetic Sensibility and the Genealogy of Economic Reason – From Protestant Indust-Reality to Baroque Semiocapital', in: Yana Milev (ed.), D.A. – A Transdisciplinary Handbook of Design Anthropology, Bern/Berlin/Frankfurt/Brussels/Oxford/Wien/New York: Peter Lang Academic Publishers 2013

<sup>35</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2. New York: New, 2003

<sup>36</sup> Eve Chiapello, Luc Boltanski, and Gregory Elliott. The New Spirit of Capitalism. London: Verso, 2005

<sup>37</sup> Flusser, Vilém, and Anthony Mathews. The Shape of Things: A Philosophy of Design. London: Reaktion, 1999

<sup>38</sup> Jean Baudrillard, 'Kool Killer, or the Insurrection of Signs', in: id, Symbolic Exchange and Death, translated by Iain Hamilton Grant, 72–86. London: Sage Publications, 1993

<sup>39</sup> Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle. New York: Zone, 1994

criticism are Kalle Lasn (*Culture Jamming*<sup>40</sup>), Noam Chomsky<sup>41</sup> (a major influence on media criticism), Mark Derry (*Hacking, Slashing and Sniping in the Empire of Signs*<sup>42</sup>) or Naomi Klein (*No Logo*<sup>43</sup>). Yet today any critique of design has evidently been successfully incorporated by the (design) industry and has had an affirmative impact on the trends it subsequently produced.

At the same time, however, there had always been an anthropological-sociological notion of design running in parallel, such as the one championed by Joseph Beuys. His understanding of design offers itself as an expanded understanding of art – an understanding of art that leaves behind the models of the white cube, the museum and the Beaux Arts by choosing explicitly correlating aspects such as the study of morphology, the involved observation in social fields, and the right to political decision-making. In doing so, Beuys combined anthropology, sensitivity (*aisthēsis*, wound) and political consciousness in the concept of *social sculpture*. The latter must be understood less in the sense of the craftsmanship of sculpture and more in the sense of social and community intervention, which he himself termed 'environments' in his installations and 'fluxus' in his *actions*. Joseph Beuys, in particular, created prototypes of twentieth-century radical social design with his political activities, for example by establishing the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research. It was intended as an 'organisational place for research, working, and communicating', where the issues of a social future were to be thought through, and, as an independent institution for higher learning, it was meant to complement the school and education system as well as seek equal legal standing with other universities. Seen in the light of higher education reforms mentioned above (Bologna) and the industrialisation of the academies, it remains an exemplary pilot project. Other models of Beuys' actions also remain prototypes for a protest movement in the context of *Gestalt*.

### **3.2. *Segno, Mythos, Techné* – Constitutive Elements of a Complementary Understanding of Design**

The constitution of an expanded and complementary notion of design as it is laid out in *D.A.*, the fundamental work of design anthropology, is structured according to the three elements – *segno*, *mythos* and *techné* – that draw their references in the epistemes of semiotics, mythology, and cultural technique. Thus, this constitution offers a new orientation of design thinking in the context of cultural production per se.

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<sup>40</sup> Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jamming – The Manifesto of the Anti-Advertising*, Freiburg: Orange Press 2005

<sup>41</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Media Control – The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, New York: Seven Stories, 2002; Noam Chomsky, *World Orders, Old and New*, New York: Columbia UP, 1994; Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman: *Manufacturing Consent – The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, New York: Pantheon 1988

<sup>42</sup> Mark Derry, 'Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing and Sniping in the Empire of Signs', in: Yana Milev (ed.), *D.A. – A Transdisciplinary Handbook of Design Anthropology*, Bern/Berlin/Frankfurt/Brussels/Oxford/Wien/New York: Peter Lang Academic Publishers 2013 [in German]

<sup>43</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand*, Toronto: Random House 2000



These three pillars highlight the genesis of so-called strong cultural metaphors and their dissemination as collective knowledge and cultural memory, which includes the preservation and renewal of societies.

The design of the constitutive principles of a complementary design concept – *segno*,<sup>44</sup> *mythus*,<sup>45</sup> *techné*<sup>46</sup> – brings an epistemology of design to the table, which, in contrast to industry-related design science, expands design by adding the dimension of cultural production. ‘Design’ therefore can transcend the idea of draft, technology, human-machine interaction, marketing and branding, politics, or technological innovation, and henceforth be understood as an episteme of anthropological science. A complementary understanding of design is based on the anthropological knowledge of the conception of signs, of image concepts, cultural textures, ‘thick descriptions’ (Clifford Geertz), writing cultures (James Clifford), narratives (myths), and everyday practices, as well as on the phenomenological knowledge of cultural techniques such as, among other things, mimesis, mimicry, reproduction and replication, exchange and negotiation, simulation and surveillance, and their various dimensions of *Gestalt*.

#### 4. Designing – On the Production of Social and Cultural Practices

The concept of *designing* can be offered (in the sense of design sociology), in analogy to the concept of *spacing* introduced by Martina Löw in spatial sociology. *Spacing* can also be transferred to complex design processes in societies, cultures, organisations, and systems, since, as Löw explains, here it is about complex services of synthesis.<sup>47</sup> *Designing*, like *spacing*, is defined as a service of synthesis precisely because it creates links and arrangements, placement and ensembles, that don't only set the conditions for space, but also as identities, sensitivities, belongings, distinctions. It can be made operational as *the* de facto technical term for cultural production as such.

The title of the symposium coordinated by Philip Ursprung in 2010 at the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Making/Crafting/Designing, was an echo to the (then newly-published) book *The Craftsman* by British sociologist Richard Sennett.<sup>48</sup> *The Craftsman*, the artisan, is the one who creates things and also uses them at the same time (tools, instruments), and who then offers these for further use. Sennett's ‘craftsman’ is identical with Löw's ‘human’, who ‘deploys, positions herself, misses, builds, networks’.<sup>49</sup> In the conclusion of the comparison and transferability between *spacing* and *designing*, we note that *spacing* in and of itself is unthinkable without *designing* – but not only

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<sup>44</sup> *Segno*: conceptions of signs and image, semiosis, symbolism, iconography, and archetypes

<sup>45</sup> *Mythus*: as a secondary semiotic system, symbolism, and semantics (signifiers)

<sup>46</sup> *Techné*: cultururation, cultural technique, human engineering, *conditio in/humana*, coding, survival, configuration, meaning, handicraft, manufacturing, self-description, etc.

<sup>47</sup> Martina Löw, *Raumsoziologie [Sociology of Space]*, supra, p. 158ff

<sup>48</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, London: Penguin Books 2008

<sup>49</sup> Martina Löw, *Raumsoziologie [Sociology of Space]*, supra, p. 158

that: *visualising*, *narrating*, or *doing* as concepts are also simply not possible without *designing*, as a term that describes both *manufacturing* and *event*.

The term *designings* refer to what Löw calls *construction mode* (*Konstruktionsleistung*).<sup>50</sup> I would like to complement the *construction mode* with the *manufacturing mode*. Manufacturing is a consequence of different actions, motives, and actions in space. In this consequence, therefore, it is always orders and arrangements that are being produced, as well as structures, relations, etc. This means that relations, proportions, correlations are always being produced. This notion of *manufacturing* refers both to productions 'from above', as well as productions 'from below', to productions as well as to destructions. In Löw one also reads: 'If [instead] we understand space itself as human and as material, then it is not only the action, but also the space itself that is a product [aggregate] that cannot be explained in and of itself, but must be derived and deduced from something outside itself.'<sup>51</sup>

Following these considerations, the term 'design' – encompassing both the dimensions of *manufacturing* and of *event* – must, therefore, be *understood* as necessarily relational and processual, since design processes combine, arrange, shift, destroy, connect, overlap, and transfer. The notion of 'design' is, like the notion of 'space', a relational understanding of 'event' – from the sociological and practical perspective of cultural studies.

The individual object (in the classic sense) also meets this relational fate; at this point we come full circle, as, on the one hand, this object was also *made*, and, on the other hand, it is embedded in a relational circuit, that, sociologically speaking, confers meaning to the object in the first place. It is customers, buyers, collectors, users, etc. that create connections by using these objects – in doing so, they stage them within the sociological categories of identity, belonging, distinction. In the same way that, in art, a work's meaning is actualised only through its relation to the viewer, critic, collector, buyer, and thus becomes an event, objects in the everyday world are actualised by their users and thus become a – mostly unconscious – event. Here, event and event linkages are in direct relationship with the principle of the relationality and linkage of things. Hence, the term 'design' reveals its dimension of *production* and *event*. The latter is always political when, in social fields, negotiations must demarcate and assert themselves as antagonisms.

In conclusion, the following definition can be formulated as a basis for a *complementary design science*:

Designing is the synesthetic performance (*techné*) of linguistic coding (*sēmeíon*, *semio*, *segno*) and linguistic exchange (*mythus*) that create symbolic

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 132

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 134 (translator's translation; original: '„Versteht man Raum selbst als menschlich und dinglich, dann ist nicht nur das Handeln, sondern auch der Raum selbst ein Produkt, welches nicht aus sich selbst erklärt werden kann, sondern hergeleitet werden muss.“')

orders (and thus disorders, arrangements, classifications...) in perceptions, environment, everyday life, institutions, society and political geographies. Derived from this, design is the most genuine anthropotechnics (*techné*) and carries consequences for any conditions of existence, living, and survival. In front of this background, design is a complex generative process of cultural (re-) production, to which the basic aesthetic and anthropological paradigms of language, image, body, media, knowledge, space, sphere, system, spaces, and architectures are attendant.