

DDM002 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN PRINCIPLES, PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES
ASSIGNMENT

The limits of the designer's responsibility

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You are not only responsible for what you do, but also what you do not do. Lao-Tse

What is my responsibility as a designer and where lies the limit of my ability to respond?

Writing and reflecting about the limits of my responsibility, actually takes me mentally and physically to my limits!

Where does responsibility as a human being start and end, and where does responsibility in the design profession end. Who am I responsible to? Myself, a supervisor, my client, law, society, mother earth? Who is the highest authority?

I am humanity in the first place and the consequences of my actions as a human being are determined by the consciousness of my mind. Am I fully aware of my actions and consequences? Or as Jesus on the cross said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."*

Is a deep seated disfunction of my mind the limit to my responsibility? Is it my ego, my instinct for survival, that protects me? Does ultimate responsibility have to fail as part of evolution? Is the end of life itself the end of my responsibility? And even that is a matter of perception.

I have been looking for guidance in the past and the present, looked into how ancient societies dealt with responsibility and how contemporary designers take it on. We live in a very complex world where humanity is (still) struggling to survive, economically, politically, religiously, environmentally, in a large scale. This assignment mainly illuminates the western society as design offsprings from there, products are mainly consumed there, and such a discussion and awareness is mostly possible and responsible to be held there.

As freethinking is one of our most nourished abilities as a designer, I aspire to further unlimited thoughts, and the courage to confront our subconsciousness which limits our responsibility.

* Jesus Christ on the day of crucifixion
Luke 23:34

¹ René Descartes, *Cogito ergo sum / Je pense donc je suis*, Principles of Philosophy, 1644, *Discourse on Method*, 1637
wikipedia.org: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cogito_ergo_sum> [accessed 05/09/2012]

² Rev. Canon Birks, *The philosophy of human responsibility - A lecture* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1872) pp.15-26.

³ Jared Diamond, *How Societies choose to fail or survive* (London: Penguin Group, 2005) p.7.

1 HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

The quote by Descartes “I think therefore I am”¹ determines our life and proof for existence. And as human beings we think, we exist, we act and we impact.

In literature from 1872 about human responsibilities can be found following: “We can reflect on ourselves, on our sensations, and the objects around us. We can act, and refrain from acting. We can choose and refuse. We can reason on the desirableness of things within our power, and open to our choice. We can compare higher and lower objects of desire, nobler and less worthy motives of action, the more immediate and the more remote, and decide between them.”² We have a choice.

Further we can find responsibility mentioned in relation to fellow-men confirmed by the whole structure of society and defined by public law and law of ethics and duty which is accountable for ancient and modern times. Since our ability to reflect on ourselves applies, we can be held accountable for ourselves. Also mentioned: “Man is responsible to himself for what he has thought and done, whether of good or evil. Man then is responsible to his actions to society, and both for thoughts and actions to his own conscience.”²

It seems that the notion of responsibility always involves the relation between a superior and an inferior. If I am responsible for any act to another human being does it make me accountable for our planet earth which nourishes us and gives us a place to be? The human being has been forever fighting to survive on this planet, fighting our fears, struggling for food and shelter. In the modern world we can understand the consequences of our previous and current behaviours and are calling for responsibility towards humanity and our nourishing mother earth. The relation between us humans and our planet is interdependent and very fragile. But our planet does not have an advocate, neither responsibility. Therefore our morality and instinct for survival is ever more essential to sustain ourselves in order to sustain our planet and vice versa, to sustain the planet in order to sustain ourselves. It seems absurd since our behaviour is rational and yet evolutionary.

Can we look for guidance in the past as how ancient societies dealt with responsibilities? What precautions did they take, if any? Whether it is the Maya culture in Mexico or the Khmer in Cambodia, they eventually disappeared and collapsed. They basically attended unintended ecological suicide or as Jared Diamond names it “ecocide”.³ Population growth forced people to intensify agricultural production eventually leading to abandoning of the place. The society emigrated or died and different societies collapsed to different degrees and in somewhat different ways and some did not collapse at all. It was most often the lack of water that brought a kingdom to their ends as for example the city of Pedra in Jordan. What we can notice is, that some environmental problems of today are new compared to the past. Additional problems that we are con-

4 Norman Potter, *What is a Designer? Things, places, messages* (London: Hyphen Press, 2002) p.96.

5 The Guardian, *Sustainability is 'the ultimate design brief'*, [guardian.co.uk: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/blog/sustainability-sustainable-design-products>](http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/blog/sustainability-sustainable-design-products) [accessed 17/09/2012]

6 Design Council UK, *Power to transform*, [designcouncil.org.uk: <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/publications/Power-to-transform>](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/publications/Power-to-transform) [accessed 05/09/2012]

7 Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, *Remembering Bill Moggridge*, [cooperhewitt.org: <http://www.cooperhewitt.org/remembering-bill/life-work>](http://www.cooperhewitt.org/remembering-bill/life-work) [accessed 15/09/2012]

fronting today are: human-caused climate change, toxic chemicals in the environment, energy shortages, and full human utilization of the earth's photosynthetic capacity. What we do today and how we react towards those challenges will determine the future of current generations. Did the Mayas really think about the survival of next generations when they left us with a calendar that actually ends at the end of this year? In other words is long-term thinking actually possible? It seems that short-term thinking has forever ruled as it drives innovation and evolution compared to stagnation and depression linked to long-term thinking. Problems that constantly need to be dealt with by future generations as their "life-task" seems recurring yet self-fulfilling, yet somehow meaningful. What is different is the scale of the impact reason to today's human population growth and globalization. The Khmer left the north of Cambodia and moved towards the south, but where do we move to? However, what did never die is the belief in the good or even better future that keeps us going, our dreams and emotions which seem to be in conflict with our rational as a human being.

2 WHAT IS DESIGN, WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Design is a cultural option.⁴ It is influential, powerful and significant. Design of today has been reduced to stylish manufactured goods, which underlie certain aesthetics and semiotics in an ever shifting zeitgeist. And the designers are most interested in the question what design can do, its application and impact, and less interested in what design is actually for and how much value it creates for society. It is estimated by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that 75% of UK consumers' carbon emissions are for the use of products and services that have been designed.⁵ Design matters; especially in terms of sustainability. Being confronted with major environmental (and economic) challenges, design needs to shift, and instead of focusing on individual solutions, design needs to co-create with the industry, policy makers, brands and businesses as well as academia and investors. The design council sees the current role of design as a social trump card; design to improve quality of life, help to guide people through those challenges, and applied in practical ways it can transform communities, businesses and the environment, the health sector, children, elderly, disabled and so on. New solutions to everyday problems through creativity and innovation - design seems to be the glue and problem solver that impacts the world.⁶

How can design help to tackle those challenges and solve problems? To design is to plan and eventually implement an idea. Those ideas can be at the core of the world's largest challenges as design in our culture is immense and interconnected. Also Bill Moggridge, cofounder of Ideo once said: "Few people think about it or are aware of it. But there is nothing made by human beings that does not involve a design decision somewhere."⁷ Design shapes what we see, what we consume or experience and what we eventually waste. Design is a value driven activity, as it changes

⁸ Norman Potter, *What is a Designer? Things, places, messages* (London: Hyphen Press, 2002) pp.6-11.

⁹ Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World – Human Ecology and Social Change* (Norwich: Fletcher & Son, 1971) p.271.

perceptions and imposes values upon the world.⁸ Design, and therewith designers, are creators of ever new culture, as they make us engage in the world while shaping our vision of the future. That power seems like a poison or drug, but it can simultaneously be altered and turned into medicine to repair the world. Design as a problem and at the same time the solution? (Nathan Shedroff)

Philosophers, artists, and designers discussed the “need for beauty”, for aesthetic values, since thousands of years as it contributes (positively) to a culture.⁹ Designers today many times still choose a career because they are drawn to the aesthetic and detail of it. All humans strive for beautiful objects rather than ugly ones, but designing with this intention only is in the modern world unresponsibly. “There are professions more harmful than design, but only a few” wrote Victor Papanek in 1972. He further accused designers of creating unnecessary and useless products who just promote materialistic lifestyles and eventually are being wasted.⁹ Design ended up concerned about consumer products and serving the economy, lacking critical approach which is actually an essential foundation of design thinking.

However, if we look closer, it is noticeable that design has been stretched out and is being applied in any kind of discipline. Design has become flexible, interactive and virtual. Incorporating business and brand strategy, information architecture and including any kind of challenges from social sciences, engineering and management. This makes the design process more complex, but at the same time more natural and holistic. The designer will resonate with the world around and within him in much higher awareness, and if he recognizes the interdependence and power to influence he has, the perception moves into multiple-dimensions. Needing to know more “why” doing things rather than “how” to do them, as design is not for the sake of designing only. Moreover, creating useless items is only the surface of what design can achieve.

3 THE RESPONSIBLE DESIGNER

The historical notion of the designer is, that he is a master communicator, a problem-solver and an innovator who is creating change. He brings creativity to an organisation or company and builds bridges between understanding and information.

Through the times the design profession moved from print to digital, and from being employed, working for multinational companies, towards entrepreneurship and authorship. But for most modern designers, type is still the language and typography the voice of (graphic) design, even though screen based work, light, sound and even tactile design has become popular.¹⁰ The designer is being expected to understand the history of design to avoid reinventing the wheel. He uses design as a tool for visual expression, a process whereby his ideas and products are given forms and meaning. The outcome can be anything; it can be expressive or neutral,

10 Steven Heller, Teresa Fernandes, *Becoming a Graphic Designer, A Guide to Careers in Design*, fourth edition (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

classical or radical, a hard-sell or soft-sell. In its best it sells, because it is also a business in that sense that it is a contracted work and being exchanged with economic reward. The level of complexity or simplicity of the designed object depends on the nature of the message and also the preference of the designer. The preference again depends on his education, the culture he lives in, his values and personal development. Looking at current expectations and skills that a designer must bring to the job, Raquel Tudela from Remolino Advertising Agency in New York demands from a designer: "People who listen well, who can explain their work clearly and who can also stand up and sell it." Or Craig Fraizer from Craig Fraizer design studio, California: "Passion, desire, and the ability to learn by observation and practice."¹⁰ Further attributes are ability to test the limits of creativity, smart thinking, organisational skills, keeping a good workflow, drawing ability, general curiosity, respect for the craft, team worker, confidence, stamina and personality to take business risks, doing promotion and marketing, and ability to keep constantly creating solid and great design work. But as Katie Holihan from Red Sky Agency captures it is many times not even possible to live out all those expectations and skills because today designers aren't many times included in important decisions until the actual design phase begins. She claims that designers want to be involved and participate in other areas as meeting the client, define strategies and influence the information architecture. Not because of being in control, but because they are genuinely interested as she states.¹⁰ And here lies the challenge to actually extend the designers responsibilities, as the limiting structure and division of responsibility within a company somehow has to be overcome. The designers personal restrictions are, to some extent, the fixed limitations of the company he works for. There it is about constructing the possibilities for life and work against frustration and disappointment associated not only with an object that needs improvement, but also with the structure and the environment in which designers flourish and are able to live their responsibilities fully.

Responsibilities of the professional designer can be found towards clients, contractors, the final consumer, towards the team and numerous specialists who may be involved. The designer has to consider the dangers of designed objects or even buildings as they should not collapse, a chair that should not break, or that the way finding in an airport is clear and safe or that you buy the product you intended to. And all has to happen in an economic frame that makes it profitable for the client, for contractors and affordable for the final consumer. Apart from the functional and economical, who are the main focuses, the work of a designer effects also the cultural, ethical, historical, political, psychological, and environmental context.

A designer who works employed in a corporate environment is usually called upon to make routine decisions regarding scale, colour, image, and so on. Things that may seem insignificant but will inevitably affect behaviour in some way. An elegant logo (for example BP re-launch) can legitimize the illegal activities of a company, or a beautifully designed

¹¹ Steven Heller, Vienne Véronique, *Citizen Designer, Perspectives on Design Responsibility* (New York: Allworth Press, 2003) preface-40.

¹² Tony Fry, *Design as Politics* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2011) p.251.

¹³ Magnus Ericson, Ramia Mazé, *Design Act - Socially and Politically Engaged Design today, critical roles and emerging tactics* (Schweden: Sternberg Press, 2011) p.28.

package can contain poor, or even unhealthy content. And in those cases the designer many times hides behind supervisors, turning a blind eye to certain disputable issues.

American graphic designer Milton Glaser (“I love NY” campaign) defines a good designer as a good citizen. Good or great design adds value to society and that links design with citizenship as he states. But goodness is subjective and a good designer can also be a bad citizen and vice versa as author Steven Heller adds to it.¹¹ If a design fails, it still contributes to culture and society, and it offers great learning, as its failure contains tremendous growth energy and enlightenment. However, accountability of a designer to some moral standard and values must be key. A designer must be culturally, and socially responsible for the impact the design has on the society and therefore he needs to leave its “serving to industry only” position at some point.

The degree of the designers responsibility is defined by his origin, family background and upbringing, by society and political system and if applicable, religious values. But the map of a designer’s set of values is diverse, even with the same level of education, interpretation about limits of responsibility are left undefined. The increasingly multicultural and globalized society is experiencing a meltdown in certain values as national values, personal values or family values. At the same time, mainly triggered by technology, a counter movement can be experienced where certain global values are being critically questioned and discussed in a common sense of purpose in a community (example occupy movement). This global, social notion of responsibility slowly heralds the end of a blackout and where every responsible citizen starts to understand that his or her respective actions always have reactions.

However, to achieve a shift in values and perceptions, it is indispensable to teach the ability of critical awareness of the whole communicative process itself and not just an awareness of ones personal input. Critical understanding equals encouraging accountability of designers and this is, as Anne Bush concludes, the role of an academy. Critical design education, which should be provided through cross-disciplinary approaches, creates engaged and aware designers who understand more of their impact of their actions or inactions.¹¹ Encouraging critical and self-aware designers starts in the classroom.¹² Raby suggests to develop a parallel design activity that considers alternative visions than those promoted by the industry and a space where the industry is challenged with critical questions by designers. There is not enough time is spend on history, audience, social context and cultural critique.¹³ The emphasis needs to shift towards a more balanced approach between the technical the cultural and the critical taught at academics and on the job. However, current design education students struggle with the antagonism of getting a job and doing meaningful and good things.

¹⁴ Steven Heller, Vienne Véronique, *Citizen Designer, Perspectives on Design Responsibility* (New York: Allworth Press, 2003) pp.5-40.

¹⁵ Tim Brown, Barry Katz, *Change by Design - How Design Thinking transforms organizations and inspires innovation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009) p.4.

4 THE RESPONSIBLE DESIGNER PLUS

The basic dynamics of evolution is not adaptation, it is creativity. Everybody has the potential for creativity, for creating beauty, and as a designer, the motivation towards creativity and freedom is especially fostered.

Designers are rather right brained than left brained and are constantly changing between the material and the spiritual world which connects them with a deeper knowledge, perception, conception and intuition. If the designer learns more about nature, its resources and materials, it is noticeable that nature has a healing mechanism and it will heal itself. Life is self-organising and the living system is self-maintaining and self-renewing. As nature has its own healing power, art and design has reflective, critical and if harnessed right, also curative powers as Chase A. Rogers argues.¹⁴ If the human mind feels powerful or empowered, it creates and nourishes positive beliefs. For example through the appropriate use of sounds, light and colours, the designer can change vibrations and currents in the mind and body. In order to understand this theory, the designer needs to engage himself with the nature of medical science and new sciences as quantum physics. Sound can transform negative emotions into a state of release, which immediate effects humans physiology. Therefore a designer has the possibility to transform the moods of individuals or of large groups of people. Frequencies of light affect different energies in the body, as, for example, certain amounts of sunlight are critical to our health. Each colour of the visible spectrum has its own wavelength and produces its own energy which again has a specific effect on the limbic system of the body. Through colour we receive most of our energies to stay healthy and they can stimulate the healing process and balance our body, mind and soul. If the designer learns how each colour can influence the mind and body, he can further use colour to influence energetic and physical states. If a designer starts to incorporate scientific research and ancient modes of healing into design strategies, there is huge potential for extending communication and therewith learning, healing and creativity. Illness is not only caused by toxins, germs and bacteria but also by dysfunctional energy patterns and unhealthy ways of relating to the environment and ourselves.¹⁴ With those new skills for designing more consciously and holistically, the designer can improve the quality of peoples lives and the planet, and for himself he can create long-lasting change, and find more meaning and fulfilment in his work.

For example an identity designer, whose role is to translate values of a group or individuum, by creating a symbol or picture that represents the personality, if he is able and aware, he can manipulate our senses and create perceptions and values. Here lies the chance of either empowering the individuum by shaping their identity or, in the worst case, misleading which leads to misinterpretation and failure. Tim Brown claims that design is many times not human centred even though it is human.¹⁵ Design thinking, as he states, relies also on our ability to recognize patterns. The

16 Mike Press, Rache Cooper, *The Design Experience - The Role of Design and Designers in the Twenty-First Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003) p.197.

17 Steven Heller, Vienne Véronique, *Citizen Designer, Perspectives on Design Responsibility* (New York: Allworth Press, 2003) p.72-207.

use of analytical skills to break down complex problems is essential, but the designer needs to sensibillise himself and develop empathy and observation skills. If he learns by the lives of others, he comes to realize that there is only feedback in any behaviour, no right or wrong.

As consumers are more connected to their emotions and are more self aware, the designer has the chance to drive behaviour change and create new patterns of consumption. If the designer decodes it right, the consumer will identify new meanings and understanding of consumption in their everyday lives and also in cultural context. Mike Press adds that "Designers in the future are going to be more like psychiatrists; people who help others do what they want rather than tell them what to do."¹⁶ The designer as a cultural intermediaries who creates meaning for others? That sounds like potential danger that comes with this holistic knowledge, as the possibility of manipulation is apparent but also not new. In former times it was god and religion that gave people meaning. Nowadays consumption provides meaning, or at least legitimises the lack of meaning and it has become a driving force for economic growth. It defines identity as individual needs are met through consuming, it defines the social group and the lifestyle rather than the job (meaning?) people do.

In todays world the main professional responsibility of design is still to create desire. But brands will no longer survive if they keep creating artificial benefits, as the consumer does not aspire anymore to manufactured dreams that most probably reduce individuality and freedom or even sacrifice their health. Obviously, business should not only be run based on feelings and intuition, but solely based on rational and analysis is not sustainable anymore. And corporate capitalism is still based on the idea of growth in a non holistic sense, which is conflicting with the people who are interested in sustaining their lives. They want to enjoy a good life, keep learning and developing new skills, and create opportunity for their children and see them grow. Consumerism is, like humanity, about evolution, and currently society is slowly moving away from self-destructive mass commodity and towards a more sustainable consumerism which is rather based on common humanity. It is observable that many large companies already contribute to a culture of sustainability. However, significant breakthroughs in sustainable product development are coming from smaller design studios and entrepreneurs and they emerge out of an ambient of unpredictably and serendipity which are seldom found in big corporate industries. To create real change, existing power structures need to be broken up and the designer needs to become a "pain in the corporate ass" as Tucker Viemeister puts it.¹⁷

For the designer as an entrepreneur this means he has the responsibility to choose a business model that reflects the notion of responsibility. That can be in form of social entrepreneurship, where the entrepreneur or designer is concerned with the quality and experience of life for the society and wants to add towards its social improvement. Apart from entrepreneurship models, design has begun to move upstream from the design

¹⁸ Businessweek, *Why design matters*, [businessweek.com: <http://www.businessweek.com/stories/2010-02-01/why-design-mattersbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice>](http://www.businessweek.com/stories/2010-02-01/why-design-mattersbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice) [accessed 16/09/2012].

¹⁹ Tony Fry, *Design as Politics* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2011) preface. pp.4-6.

studio into boardrooms of international companies and organisations were the designer addresses complex problems such as health related issues, climate change, crime prevention and other social challenges working in interdisciplinary teams as psychologists, engineers, business experts coupled with an increasing overlap in activities and responsibilities. A responsible designer plus needs to have a mind set of confidence, curiosity and most important optimism. He needs a strong, emotional constitution and diplomatic skills to translate all the extracted information into meaningful outcomes.

5 POLITICS AND ART

Historically, design, as design thinking, has played an important role in shaping politics. Design has, consciously or not, created value to humanity. The Bill of Rights, Marshall Plan, Medecins Sans Frontières, might not directly be linked to design, yet those achievements were designed. ¹⁸ To rethink the relationship between design and its current main ally, the market place, need to go beyond the limit of just good design. If the designer deliberately engages in politics, relating to citizens rather than to consumers, his concerns and excursions might actually have a positive effect on humanity. Tony Fry arguments, that design, in order to be transformed against the unsustainable, needs to move out of the economic function and into the political frame. “Design will weave its way as a vital political agent.”¹⁹ And in fact, design is profoundly political as it has impressive power commercially influencing peoples life and their material and cultural economy. The political ideology, and with it democracy, will somehow be transformed as democracy is unable to deliver sustainment. The degree of our environmental and social problems calls for design to break down the exclusivity of the discourse of politics. Fry sees this is as a shout for great thinkers and intense conversations between the fields of politics and design. Designers need to become pro actively political and directly confront politics. It is a critical mass of people that is needed who is willing to face fully what problems we humans create, who take leading direction and change the political mind set. Is it worthwhile for a designer to aim for a membership for example in the “Club of Rome”?

Can the designer be held responsible to create a new economic paradigm that abandons the notion of continual quantitative growth (which equals lifetime to fill) and which seems our only current economic alternative, and replace it with something more meaningful and sustainable? Is this actually possible? Fry argues that the economic standards of living for the privileged would have to decrease and status-related consumptions and other commodity desires will eventually die. Prospective, the emphasis will be rather on a quality based economy and an active social life that is oriented towards more cultural production. The material culture will be

²⁰ Tony Fry, *Design as Politics* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2011) p.251.

²¹ Donald Judd, [wikipedia.org: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Judd>](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Judd) [accessed 16/09/2012].

smaller but much more enriched. However, this movement does not imply a complete return to nature but will result into critical reflection with the “naturalized artificial” that presently infuses the world. Currently the utopian idea is still unsupported by the eternal mantra “to live is to suffer” which needs to be analysed further.²⁰

This lifts the discussion into rather artistic and spiritual levels. It appears that the majority of people in the design and art industry long for critical design that makes us think and not only solves problems and finds answers. Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby declare that when technology is developing as fast and radical, critical thinking and reflection by the designer is diligently. But still most designers view design as somehow neutral, clean and pure and being provocative and challenging seems to be reserved for the art. But art is too far away from the world of mass consumption and electronic consumer products to be effective in this context. Art is still kept too exclusive and rather a beautiful abscess without deep going, long-lasting vibrations even though it is intertwined with the consumerist culture. In comparison to an artist, a designer must be capable of detaching himself from the work. As Donald Judd says: “Design has to work and art does not”.²¹ But maybe design has to play the role of art in the future as art does not have enough impact. However, if the designer utilizes of his political and artistic skills, he still needs to find a solution into where he can place those answers to the critical questions so that the consumer is able to grasp them and translate them. That is where his professional responsibility ends, and the personal empathy and interest for humanity starts.

18 Openideo, *How might we identify and celebrate businesses that innovate for world benefit – and inspire other companies to do the same?* openideo.com: <<http://www.openideo.com/open/business-impact-challenge/brief.html>> [accessed 19/09/2012].

6 REFLECTION

Critique or critical questions towards consumption or commercial activities are not really en vogue (not even the Queen of England was allowed to enter the financial City of London in ancient times). Throughout history, critique was left to philosophers and moral authorities like the church. Over the time, those authorities were replaced by commercialism in the western world, and I would like to argue, nearly all over the world. It were (egocentric) activities that kept us going. Standing still and reflecting on consequences was only for a few. It was to frightened, not wanted or never possible. The scientific and philosophical question of “why” didn’t exist in the commercial world. The society nourished the mantra of commercial growth as good, and we still do. To grow is good, in fact, it is evolutionary inevitable. But the way we grow makes us and our planet sick - and we travel with immense speed towards failure and error! We currently are treating side effects of our past decisions as we still live in a system that encourages intervention when problems occur, instead of prevention. We are out of balance, and will have to do an evolutionary jump in order to sustain ourselves.

For a designer, as an artist and as a humanist, responsibility lies in the awareness the designer gives towards his values and ideology. To develop strong values means personal development. The designer has to know himself very good, and that comes through lifetime lived and experiences made. Self-reflection and criticism is not an ego-coaxing activity, but it contributes towards evolution. The designer has the ability, everyday again, to evaluate and reflect on the decisions he makes, and what responsibilities he wants to take on. Or does he want to continue to feel powerless?

After all, it is the designer’s responsibility to participate more consciously in the evolutionary process of shaping a new society. The platform Open Ideo just recently called for a new challenge to find a way to identify businesses who innovate for the world benefit and a way of inspiring others to do the same.²¹ And at a time were the service industry is stuck, this movement might partly be nothing less than a survival strategy for the designer. The challenge is to develop shared values in a heterogeneous society while fostering diversity and personal freedom. It is not about becoming a serious moralist, but not doing it, is not an idea. The designer is still the aesthete who has nearly god status (Steve Jobs), and a straight pathway to our hearts and souls.

The world is not ruled by artists and designers yet, but as catalysts and optimists, the designer will nevertheless explore new pathways. The ability to harness creativity, celebrate diversity and shape evolution is therewith limitless. However, personally I learned, that most of our views are just a matter of perception, and depending on the way we frame problems and limits. This leads me to the conclusion that the limit is, were we think the limit is; we set it ourselves.

**You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for
what you do not say. Martin Luther**

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