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Stefan Alfred Wolf BA

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On Dwelling

**Design Anthropological Considerations of
Material Culture in the Domestic Sphere**

*for Charlotte
to prove the point that it's never too late to get things done.*

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CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Anthropology at home in homes	2
1.2. Framework	5
2. MATERIAL CULTURE	9
2.1. The Meaning of Things	10
2.1.1. The Case of the Tram Chair	13
2.1.2. Semiotic Ideologies	18
2.2. What Objects Do	21
2.2.1. Objects with Agency	22
2.2.2. Agency within a Network	28
2.3. What Things Are	32
2.3.1. Objectification	33
2.3.2. Objectification through Consumption	39
2.3.3. Gustav's Cave	41
2.4. Towards a Critique of Material Culture	44
2.5. Summing Up	49
3. DESIGN ANTHROPOLOGY	53
3.1. Approaching the Field	54
3.1.1. Anthropology for Design	56
3.1.2. Anthropology of Design	57
3.1.3. Anthropology with Design	59
3.1.4. Conclusion	64
3.2. Who Designs?	66
3.2.1. The Householder as Designer?	66
3.2.2. If We All Are Designers	70
3.2.3. Il Disegno	73
3.2.4. Innovation vs. Improvisation	74
3.2.5. Conclusion	79

3.3. The Matter of Form	80
3.3.1. The Concept of the User-Producer	80
3.3.2. The Berlin Table	84
3.3.3. On Growing Objects	87
3.3.4. Conclusion	94
3.4. On Designing	95
3.4.1. The Studio	96
3.4.2. The Creation of Context	98
3.4.3. The Popping Up Designer Chairs	102
3.4.4. Summing Up	107
4. CONCLUSION	111
5. REFERENCES	119
5.1. Bibliography	119
5.2. Web-References	125
Appendix / Abstracts	127

1. INTRODUCTION

On Dwelling is about the study of people in their homes. However, it is not another study about home as a vital site "to understand diverse and essential aspects of human existence from the self, gender, the nature of individuality, family and social relations (...) and the elemental terms of social life in general" (Buchli et al. 2004:2). My concern is rather what people are doing when they dwell.

Yet, in what ways could dwelling be grasped? What exactly is 'dwelling'? When one sits on a club chair in a living room, the floor lamp turned on, reading a book? Is it dwelling, when one prepares a meal or has friends invited for dinner? Or, is dwelling rather something intimate, adhere to the domestic sphere? Dwelling, in this sense, appears more as an inactivity rather than something one actively performs – unlike reading, cooking or having a nice evening with friends. In terms of Martin Heidegger's famous article *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1993), dwelling is understood as "an activity that man performs alongside many other activities." (Heidegger 1993:349) When one spends an evening at home on a club chair reading a book, the activity of dwelling is – according to Heidegger – performed besides reading. The same goes with cooking, bathing, sleeping, eating and all the activities one performs within a specific locality – in every case, the activity of dwelling is implied. Dwelling, in this sense, could be pictured as an activity which is intertwined to any activity one performs in the domestic sphere.

Considering domestic activities more closely, there are always material objects involved. While reading a book, one might sit on a specific piece of furniture, having a pile of bound pages in one's hand. If one takes a bath, a bathing tube and towels are involved; even when one sleeps there is some kind of mattress involved. Thus, any activity one performs while she or he dwells is also an activity exercised with material objects. To put it in Heidegger's words, "dwelling is itself always a staying with things" (Heidegger 1993:353). Yet, Heidegger's notion of things is somewhat leading into a different direction than I am concerned with here. His concept of things¹ represents the fourfold: earth and sky as well as the divine and the mortals. This is because Heidegger, in his article, is primarily concerned with building. However, my interest in Heidegger is rather to take this extraction as a starting point for dealing with the topic of dwelling – since every anthropologist, implicitly or not, relies on some philosophical concept.

¹ The concept of the thing is demonstrated in detail in Heidegger's *Poetry, Language and Thought* (Heidegger 1971).

By picturing dwelling as a social activity performed alongside other activities, I use the field of Design Anthropology to understand what it means to stay with things – the material objects my interlocutors dwell with. Design is often depicted as "a process of thought and planning (...) as a universal human capacity that sets humankind apart from nature" (Otto et al. 2013:1). Design Anthropology as an emerging field is concerned with design processes which intervene into existing realities by their (material) products (Otto et al. 2013). Design specialists create all sorts of solutions to different economic as well as social domains. Indeed, "design has arguably become one of the major sites of cultural production" (Otto et al. 2013). According to Martin Heidegger, building – as a form of creation – could be pictured as dwelling: "building belongs to dwelling and (...) receives its essence from dwelling" (Heidegger 1993:362). For him, building is "by virtue constructing locales" (Heidegger 1993:360). Locales such as the flats my interlocutors dwell in; locales where they perform the activity of dwelling alongside other activities. Yet, building, according to Heidegger, is not grounded in built forms – architecture and engineering constructions – but in the Greek word 'tikto', which means "to bring forth or to produce" (Heidegger 1993:361), in the sense of letting appear. Although Daniel Miller, one of the leading figures of material culture studies, observed that "in industrialized societies (...) people are paying attention (...) to their own home (...) its decoration, its furnishings and the arrays of objects that fill its spaces" (Miller 2001:1), my interest in Design Anthropology is not to explore how people decorate and furnish their homes by using material objects. Design Anthropology sets itself apart from material culture "in so far as it sets out to question the separation of production from consumption and the precedence of design over use." (Gunn et al. 2012:10) Since I regard dwelling as a staying with things and not as a construction of things, I am concerned with what could be learned from the field of Design Anthropology. Which insights could be gained for the topic of dwelling from a field interested in the distinct activity of designing?

In this sense, I ask what dwelling means in regard to the material objects – the things – my interlocutors stay with? What can Design Anthropology contribute to the topic of dwelling in terms of a staying with things? How does Design Anthropology contribute to a different understanding of material objects in the domestic sphere?

1.1. DOING ANTHROPOLOGY AT HOME IN HOMES

I conducted research in six different households in Vienna. I did not bother about whatsoever categorization of the people I conducted research with; if they shared a flat or lived by their own; if they were married or not; about gender, class or any other kind of categorization. So

my data includes a broad variety of different people. There was Sebastian², for example, who, as I got to know him, had just bought himself a penthouse to live on his own – or, better to say, lived there those weeks he was not working abroad as an expatriate. And there were Gustav and his flatmate, who shared a run-down flat together. There was Henriette, who lived in an apartment equipped with furniture from different periods, as well as Sybille, who rented her first flat on her own after having got tired from sharing bathrooms and kitchens with friends. When Sybille was keen on decorating her new flat, the IKEA catalog was always at hand. There was the couple Franziska and Johannes, having lived together for several years, who hosted me in a flat which consisted almost exclusively of second hand things. And Franz, who lived on his own and preferred to have everything neat and clean around him.

I have chosen Vienna for this project out of the reason that when I speak of dwelling, I am referring to an activity which is performed in a specific locale – *in* a household, in homes and flats. However, such an understanding of dwelling – that dwelling takes place *in* a certain space – follows a specific form of thinking, according to which dwelling is located within a specific container. Stephan Günzel pointed out that thinking about the locale in such terms is "continuously dominated by the modern vision of natural sciences" (Günzel 2006:41). Such understanding led to the spatial turn in anthropology and relating disciplines such as human geography at the end of the 1990s. By "foregrounding spatial dimensions of culture rather than treating them as background, (...) the notion that all behavior is located in and constructed of space has taken new meaning." (Low et al. 2003:1) From such a perspective, questions of how people transform 'spaces' into 'places' circled around – how they transform built environments into homes, for instance. However, since I was not interested in place-making but in dwelling, I decided to conduct research among people who share an understanding of place as a kind of container where dwelling is performed *in*. Thus, to some extent, my project could be called: anthropology at home in homes. At home, because Vienna can be considered as my home, and in homes, because I was staying with people. This is why, when I refer to the pronouns 'us' and 'we', I always refer to the cultural background of my interlocutors as well as to mine.

To explore dwelling within households, I have chosen to stay with people in their domestic sphere and to do participant observation. Yet, I was not paying my interlocutors short-visits from time to time, but rather I was visiting with them for a couple of days. I was offered a guest sofa and stayed with them, observing their everyday routines. Just as coming home from work, reading magazines while lying on a sofa, preparing coffee in the morning with an

² I have changed all the names of my interlocutors. But I am sure everyone will find themselves in the episodes I present in this text.

espresso maker, cleaning a table after it was used or fetching condiments from a shelf. So it was inevitable to participate also in the daily routines such as eating together, or, as it was in the case with Johannes and Franziska, cooking and brushing teeth in their bathroom together. It was within these situations that new considerations for the topic of dwelling opened up, as I will show.

Besides staying with people, another set of data was gathered in a furniture store in Vienna which is specialized in 'young' design. There, I have learned not only about certain characteristics and qualities of materials used in furniture, but also about the designers and manufacturers behind them. How manufacturers realize a new product as well as how design processes look like. I also observed costumers' decisions for a specific piece of furniture and entered many homes for consultancy as well as for supervising the delivery of new furniture. But while I hoped to gain access to homes via the shop, quite at the beginning of my project I realized that I would face ethical issues since the shop became my professional home during the past years. Distinguishing between doing research and working together with designers, manufacturers and costumers on a professional basis has proven to be extremely difficult. Although the episodes I wrote down in my field-diary decreased, while my expertise in the fields of management, design and marketing grew, some occasions eventually made it into my notebooks. The noted conversations with designers and manufacturers about their products thus have more informal character, in the sense that they are addressing me as a person interested in the topic of dwelling, rather than addressing my profession.

One of the pieces which were sold at the shop I recognized in the flat of one of my interlocutors. Since my interest in dwelling was connected to the material objects my interlocutors had decided to stay with and which they used in their daily routines, many conversations were circling around the decoration and furnishings of their homes. On the last evening of every stay, I conducted an unstructured interview with the person, or, as it was in the case of Franziska and Johannes, a group discussion. The intention behind these interviews was to discuss my observations with them by telling my interlocutors which situations I found interesting for my research. The interviews often led to discussions during which my interlocutors deeper reflected on several pieces. Thus, the interviews were recorded. Sometimes, I started my recordings earlier, when I succeeded to trigger a conversation about furnishings. However, although I present my data in the following text in direct speech, I want to point out that not all of them are part of recordings. Most of the passages of conversations were remembered and brought to paper in form of direct speech. I have chosen this form of writing my field-diary, since I was interested not so much in what I was told, but rather in what my interlocutors actually said. For the specific style of writing my ethnographic examples – it could be labeled 'impressionist tale' (Van Maanen 2011) –, I have decided for it to "present the

doing of fieldwork rather than simply the doer or the done." (Van Maanen 2011:102) So, I want to give an impression of my field and of how it felt like working in it.

1.2. FRAMEWORK

By picturing dwelling as a social activity one performs while staying with things, I first seek to understand dwelling in regard to the material objects – the things my interlocutors stay with – using material culture studies. Since material culture studies embody "a healthy theoretical pluralism (...) with regard to the significance and interpretation of material forms in relation to social relations" (Tilley 2006c:7), also the understanding of things requires a set of different theoretical traditions. I will raise semiotics as an aspect of symbolic representation (Cieraad 1999), since "within academic literature the home is often posited as the key arena in transmitting and codifying of oneself to others" (Garvey 2001:47). Relying on Roland Barthes, I seek to understand in what ways single objects and furnishings can function as communicators of a specific idea – as signs which signify a certain concept. Webb Keane (2005), however, by relying on Charles Sanders Pierce, argues for a semiotic ideology. He argues not to privilege the idea over the material thing, in the sense that objects are not material dummies for mental concepts. But rather, material objects matter in social relations – they do play a role.

Rather than focusing on human actors which encode things with significance, Arjun Appadurai (1986) suggested to picture things as a category not distinct from human beings. Things themselves have a social life too (Appadurai 1986). Thus, my concern addresses the agentive power of things. Alfred Gell pictured "social agents (...) [as] persons, things, animals, divinities, in fact, anything at all." (Gell 1998:22) According to his theory, material objects have agency within social situations. Although they cannot actually act, they embody complex intentionalities and have the ability to mediate social agency to others. A more radical point, which dispels any category between objects and subjects, provides Bruno Latour. For Latour, to distinguish between agentive subjects and acted upon objects follows a modern idea (Latour 1993). He rather suggests that neither subjects nor objects have the capacity to act, but that agency is distributed throughout a network (Latour 2005). Hence, subjects and objects are fused into a single category of actants. Yet, Daniel Miller argues that "we may often find ourselves conducting research among people for whom 'common-sense' consists of a clear distinction between subjects and objects defined by their opposition." (Miller 2005:14). To diminish the subject/object division, Miller offers the concept of objectification. With extractions from Hegel, Marx and Simmel, Miller argues that by building social relations towards objects, the social subject diminishes a tension created by consciousness which has not

recognized an alienated object as its own creation. So, by the process of objectification people actively "appropriate consumer goods, objectify and fashion their identities through for example (...) home furnishing (...). Once bought, home consumer products can be endlessly personalized and become as much part of the modern self as craft products in small-scale societies." (Tilley 2006b:68)

Although Miller's concept has been popular among scholars dealing with material objects inside households (Attfield 2000, Clarke 2001, Pink 2004, Garvey 2013 etc.), it was criticized that Miller's concept is too humanistic (Henare et al. 2007). Rather than picturing objects that run through different stages of consciousness and treating them as modes of representing selfhood, one should regard them as they appear ethnographically. According to the concept of 'thinking through things' (Henare et al. 2007), "the 'things' themselves dictate a plurality of ontologies" (Henare et al. 2007:7) defined by the ethnographic subject.

By emphasizing the notion of 'staying with' things in regard to Heidegger's building – for according to him, "building is really dwelling" (Heidegger 1993:350) –, Design Anthropology is introduced to the topic of dwelling. In contrast to material culture studies, which are solely focusing on how products or services that are first designed are then appropriated to the needs of the users or consumers (Gunn et al. 2012), Design Anthropology is concerned with the process of creation. Although Miller sees a connection between these two fields, by arguing that householders can be pictured analogously to designers and museum curators (Miller 2011), being creative when decorating a flat is not the same as being a designer. This does not mean that professional designers have true creativity, while all others have conventional creativity (Liep 2001). Tim Ingold and Elisabeth Hallam (2008) argue not to picture creativity with reference to a modern understanding as innovation in term of its results, but as cultural improvisation "in terms of the movements that gave rise to them." (Ingold et al. 2007:3) Their understanding of creativity challenges the clear cut distinction that people use what was first created by designers. Especially within co-designing processes the separation between designers and users underwent a critical reflection, by asking "who can be included in the process of design and with what influence and power" (Redström 2012:84)? Johan Redström argues that the "struggle with articulation of relations between design and use" has something to do with how we perceive objects (Redström 2008, 2012).

One way of building a closer relation between design and use in regard to objects is offered by Tim Ingold and his concept of the 'user-cum-producer' (Ingold 2012). Ingold challenges the separation between production and consumption by arguing that things are not finished and never fixed, but are in a constant process of making. Ingold argues for a shift in perspective; away from picturing objects as given in advance towards what he calls dwelling perspective, in

which "the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings." (Ingold 2000:186) Therefore, Ingold extends the notion of growth to the inanimate (Ingold 2000). Growing objects means an engagement with the material – as an "engagement (...) within an ongoing process of life" (Ingold 2012:29). This process is not a linear one which has a beginning and an end. It is rather rhythmical, in the sense that with every move laying the foundation for the next thing to happen (Ingold 2012). Hence, making is an operation which also requires skills just as judgement and care, and which is performed by skilled practitioners – skilled practitioners just as designers. Yet, this does not mean that design is part of everything we do, as Caroline Gatt and Tim Ingold (2013) suggest. Rather, one has to take professional design activities into account to understand what 'diffusive design' – as Enzo Manzini (2015) calls a design practice everyone performs – could be.

Professional design, in this sense, has less to do with the imagination of future products or services. Otherwise, as Appadurai states, "human history (...) could be re-written as a history of design." (Appadurai 2013: 254) By following Adam Drazin's close observations of a design process and demonstration of particularities within these practices (Drazin 2013), design is regarded as a distinct practice. Yet, these close observations open up new perspectives on everyday situations of dwelling. Since dwelling is pictured as a staying with things in the domestic sphere, the insights gained also reflect back on how material objects can be viewed.

According to these considerations, I structure my thesis in the following chapters. In the first chapter, I reflect on *What Things Mean*. By using semiotic theory, I ask if the German saying – following the 19th century novelist Christian Morgenstern – 'show me how you dwell and I tell you who you are' grasps the character of dwelling. While I reject a view that privileges the idea over the material thing, I will argue along with Webb Kaene (2005) that things do play a role. Thus, the second chapter circles around the question *What Do Things Do?* Questioning in how far things have agentive power. Since theories concerned with agency of things are relying on the dissolving of the subject/object division, which often is not sound ethnographically, in the third chapter, I take a step back and ask *What Are Things?* By relying on Daniel Miller's concept of objectification (Miller 1998), I show how my interlocutors build social relations to the material objects they surround themselves with. Although material culture studies following Miller's approach contributed to the topic of objects in the domestic sphere, I shall emphasize *A Critique On Material Culture* following a 'thinking through things' approach (Henare et al. 2007).

In the second chapter, I turn my focus to Design Anthropology. *Approaching The Field*, I present the different branches addressing design in anthropology. Although Design

Anthropology is an emerging field, there can already be distinguished between anthropology for, of and with design (Gunn et al. 2012). Since all of these branches relate to design differently, I shall outline which is suitable for the topic of dwelling. In the next section, I introduce Miller's suggestion to treat householders as designers, yet, by asking *Who Designs?*, I will critically reflect on his view. Although the concept of the designer is grounded in the Renaissance notion of 'il disegno' (Kemp 1974), I consider design as a creative process which is linked to cultural creativity (Ingold et al. 2007). Since co-designing processes lead to a new consideration of who is responsible for the creation of things, I will be concerned with *The Matter of Form*. Relying on Tim Ingold's notion of the 'user-cum-producer' (2012) and his concept of the 'dwelling perspective' (2000), I shall show that the notion of form is a slippery one. In Ingold's terms, objects are in a constant process of making by skilled practitioners who are working in a field of forces. Yet, how can making, in Ingold's sense, be distinguished from designing? In the section *On Designing*, I shall reflect on the activity of professional designers, and argue against designing as a 'popular activity' (Drazin 2012). Rather, by focusing on the activities in design processes, I seek to understand in how far Design Anthropology can contribute to the topic of dwelling.

By knitting together material culture and Design Anthropology in my *Conclusion*, I shall reflect on the new perspectives Design Anthropology offers for the topic of dwelling. What kind of perspectives it offers for the considerations of material objects people stay with in the domestic sphere.

2. MATERIAL CULTURE

Martin Heidegger in his phenomenological tradition argues that "dwelling itself is always a staying with things" (Heidegger 1993:353). When I entered the flats of my interlocutors, I was able to observe all kinds of things: a bed, a fridge, a table, chairs, bookshelves – you name it. From electronic consumer goods to vintage furniture, people stay with things. As Heidegger stated, dwelling itself is a staying with these things. I want to take this definition as a starting point for stepping into material culture studies, which "involve the analysis of a domain of things or objects which are endlessly diverse: anything from a packet of fast food to a house to an entire landscape, and either in the past or in the present, within contemporary urban and industrial cultures (...) to small-scale societies in Africa, Asia or the Pacific." (Tilley 2006b:4) Hence, the studies of material culture are an interdisciplinary field exploring the relations between things and persons. The conceptualization of things can be grasped by different focuses. Either, "things as materially existing and having a significance in the world independent from any human action or intervention" (Tilley 2006b:4), or, things as created by people, named artifacts. Further, things can be grasped by the manner how they relate to unconscious structures or thoughts and have consequences in social lives beyond the individual subject (Tilley 2006b). Indeed, if we look at interior decoration, things can relate to unconscious structures: for example, the way how we organize our flats, or what kind of furniture we think is suitable for rooms we regard as being more public than others. Pierre Bourdieu (1987), for instance, saw in ordinary choices like furniture particularly deep-rooting preferences of taste connected to social class distinctions. In this sense, even particular pieces of furniture could have specific significance. Thus, the first section of this chapter is concerned with what things *mean* – the way how they signify a specific concept about what certain pieces of furniture are and where their qualities lie.

Material culture, more broadly, also focuses on the relationship between things and human culture or society – "things as an integral part of being human and living together with others" (Tilley 2006b:4). Tilley's definition echoes Heidegger's statement that dwelling – seen as a social activity – is a staying with things. Things, according to material culture studies, play an integral part in the lives of humans. Thus, in the second section, I want to address the role things play in our worlds – in regard to what they *do* in our worlds. I will use 'things' and 'objects' as synonymous notions, since within material culture there is no distinct division between objects as human products, and things as a more general notion also implying natural objects such as stones or trees.

The third section of this chapter will be concerned with what is often labeled as the 'material culture turn' (Hicks 2010). Especially Daniel Miller and a group of scholars around him developed material culture studies as an anthropology of consumption. By going deeply into Miller's dialectical outline of his theory, I seek to understand what things *are*, in order to understand what we do when we dwell with them.

2.1. THE MEANING OF THINGS

Irene Cieraad stated that "we still express ourselves symbolically in the spatial arrangements and decorations of our houses and the surrounding public space" (Cieraad 1999:2). In other words, we represent ourselves through symbols in spatial arrangements and decorations – what kind of furnishings we have and how we arrange them in a flat. In her analysis of seventeenth century Holland and 'women domestication', Cieraad shows a "curious symbolic link between the female hymen and the window pane." (Cieraad 1999:4) Although this symbolism is long forgotten, Cieraad observes a "current Dutch female behavior towards the window" (Cieraad 1999:4). In form of window decoration or window prostitution, as examples of the forgotten symbolic link. Yet, for Cieraad, interior decorations are not the focus of interest, but the meanings behind them.

For Sebastian Hackenschmidt, especially pieces of furniture function as communicators of various messages towards their users or spectators (Hackenschmidt et al. 2011). He relies on the idea that "pieces of furniture applied the role of communication instruments, which not only were messengers of instruments of trade and information, but constituted a message in themselves" (Hackenschmidt et al. 2011:13). In his sense, furniture is a message in itself. Hackenschmidt elaborated his idea with the example of the cantilever chair – "a symptom of an accelerating society (...) which links its design and technologies to new transportation means and machines" (Hackenschmidt 2011b:236). In his analysis of a cantilever chair named 'Airline' by Kem Weber, Hackenschmidt not only pictures the chair as an aesthetic style mark and as a symbol of the twentieth century machine age, he also suggests, "Couldn't it be the secret message of the cantilever chair to get the human material going?" (Hackenschmidt 2011b:254). Hence, the cantilever chair can be pictured as a symbol of modernity – pictured in terms of a message of an accelerating society at the beginning of the twentieth century, signifying speed through its aerodynamic design. So, for Hackenschmidt, furniture carries meaning in itself and communicates it to spectators or users. The cantilever chair, according to Hackenschmidt, is the messenger of a specific idea, in this case modernity.

Such an approach follows a semiotic thinking tradition. Semiotics had its heydays during the 1960s and 1970s (Layton 2006), but can still be found within representational theories (Hall

1997), and also within literature addressing the topic of dwelling. Cieraad's (1999) statement about expressing oneself symbolically through spatial arrangements serves as an example: as Cieraad uses the word, a symbol communicates an idea – it has a specific meaning by which we express ourselves. By having a cantilever chair in one's flat, for instance.

It was Émile Durkheim, who brought in what later would be called semiotics or semiology to material culture (Layton 2006). In his analysis of Aboriginal totemism (Durkheim 1994), Durkheim paralleled the classifications of totemic animals to the classifications of social groups. He found out that the actual species of animals is less sacred than its representation in totemic art, because it's the artistic motif and not the animal itself that represents the clan. Therefore, Durkheim argued that the existence of society is depending on symbols. (Layton 2006) The Durkheimian approach was applied by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure's legacy was to explain language systematically through distinct dichotomies. According to him, the linguistic sign has "two components, the signified or idea, and the signifier, the spoken, sound(s) that conventionally express that idea" (Layton 2006:30). In this sense, signs do not have meaning because of a direct relationship with an object (or action). Rather, a sign is understood as a combination of the material – the signifier in form of a sound or a written word – and the mental concept behind it – the signified. When speaking of semiology, it is important to recall Saussure's distinction between *langage* – language – and *parole* – speech (Barthes 1983). Language is the underlying structure, the grammar, so to speak, whereas speech is what people actually speak or do. Language is identified with the social collectivity; an individual cannot modify language, because communication through speech wouldn't no longer be possible. Structuralist semiology focuses on language and not on speech – it is, one may argue, the search of the underlying grammar.

Roland Barthes, who was in his analyses more concerned with objects like fashion, for instance, stressed the importance of the precise division between language and speech. "It is true that objects, images and patterns of behavior can signify, and do so on a large scale, but never autonomously. (...) As for collections of objects (...) they enjoy the status of systems only in so far as they pass through the relay of language, which extracts their signifiers and names their signifieds." (Barthes 1983:10) Barthes further explains this in his 'system of cars and furniture' (Barthes 1983). Here, "language is formed both by the oppositions of functionally identical pieces, (...) each of which according to its 'style', refers to a different meaning (...) and the rules of association of the different units at the level of a room ('furnishing')" (Barthes 1983:29). The speech, or parole, in this system "is here formed either by the insignificant variations which the user can introduce into one unit (by tinkering with one element for instance) or by freedom in associating pieces of furniture together" (Barthes 1983:29–30). The speech in Barthes' sense does not simply form sentences out of language

like in the Saussurian sense. On the contrary, Barthes favors Claude Lévi-Strauss' thinking by arguing that speech is "essentially an individual act of selection and actualization" (Barthes 1983:15). Lévi-Strauss, who assumed a unifying culture (language) beyond the mind of its members, sees culture as an ongoing communication and modification through individuals (speech) which leads to an endless transformation of culture. For Barthes, this actualization is referring to the actualization of language, or the grammar, which makes it possible that an individual act can modify language. Although collections are seen as individual acts which have the potential to modify, they also have to pass through the system of language, in so far as the system of language "extracts their signifiers and names their signifieds" (Barthes 1983:10). This means that furnishing a flat with various pieces in form of a collection can be seen as an individual act and therefore as a form of self-expression (Layton 2006). This collection is meaningful in itself, because it passes through the scheme of language; language which is formed by the distinction of a certain 'style' – or, let's say 'visual appearance' rather than 'style' – as well as formed by the way pieces of furniture are put together (Barthes 1983). The meaning of this furnishing as a self-expression is then formed by language.

The problem Barthes has when it comes to things like furniture or cars, is that a dualistic concept of linguistics is not far reaching enough. A chair, for instance, signifies the concept of sitting, full stop. But what about complex categories like modernity as in Hackenschmidt's example of the cantilever chair? Here, Barthes introduces a second system of signification – the myth. Barthes argues that within the concept of the myth the sign is converted into a new kind of signifier for the myth – for example, a myth of modernity. Barthes provides his reader with an example for a myth of modernity in form of the Citroën DS, which "obviously (...) has fallen out of the sky inasmuch as it appears at the first sight as a superlative object" (Barthes 1972:88). What is within a semiotic system of language a car³, becomes a sign for modernity⁴ through the myth. Similarly, the cantilever chair – which is no more less than a chair, although the back legs are missing – becomes a sign of modernity and speed (Hackenschmidt 2011b) through the myth. Barthes explicitly focused on processes of transformation the myth enables by demonstrating how the myth comes into being, which meaning it has, and how it is transported by objects. The myth itself is a construction which appears to be 'natural' and universal and serves an ideological function. Hence, the meaning the myth provides is governed by the bourgeoisie and turns cultural values into universal, even 'natural' ones (Barthes 1972).

³ The car in Barthes example is not merely seen as a single object, but rather as a collection of different objects like leather seats, a staring wheel, and so on.

⁴ Barthes originally doesn't speak about modernity, rather, the 'new Citroën' "signifies a kind of control exercised over motion, which is henceforth conceived as comfort rather than performance. One is obviously turning from an alchemy of speed to a relish in driving." (Barthes 1972:89)

Stuart Hall offered a more multilayered approach to meaning, assuming it is not particularly some kind of bourgeoisie who governs over meaning as Barthes exemplified in his *Mythologies* (Barthes 1972). "Our 'circuit of culture' suggests that in fact meanings are produced at several different sites and circulated through several different processes and practices" (Hall 1997:3). Within this systemic circuit, representation is part of a process in which production, consumption, regulation and identity interact. Hall clearly follows a semiotic tradition by stating that "essentially we can say that all these practices 'work like languages', not because they are all written or spoken, ... but because they all use some element to stand for or represent what we want to say, to express or communicate a thought, concept, idea or feeling" (Hall 1997:4). Through language, which is always a common language (Barthes 1983), we are able to express our thoughts and ideas into spoken words, visual images – or even objects. In short, "representation is the production of meaning through language" (Hall 1997:28). Hall is especially concerned with visual images rather than with objects, and differs from Barthes inasmuch as for Hall it isn't some kind of deterministic power which is producing meaning, rather, "meaning is produced by the practice, the 'work', of representation. It is constructed through signifying – i.e. meaning producing – practices." (Hall 1997:28) Therefore, Hall rejects a reflective approach to representation, in which meaning lies in the object itself, and language functions only as a mirror. He also dismisses an intentional approach to representation, in which a person imposes his or her meaning on an object through language. Rather, Hall is seeking for a more "general theory of representation" (Hall 1997:25), because individual meanings have to "enter into the rules, codes and conventions of language" (Hall 1997:25). What Hall proposes is a constructionist approach to representation, in which "social actors (...) use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning" (Hall 1997:25). Hall is especially concerned with the discourse in which the signifying practice takes place. Hence, a signifying practice is always a "struggle over meaning which constitutes and is unfinished" (Hall 1997b: 277).

2.1.1. THE CASE OF THE TRAM CHAIR

I was standing in the staircase of an early 20th century building in Vienna in front of a huge black wooden door as it is typical for buildings of this time. I rang the doorbell and heard steps from inside the flat, when the light in the staircase went dark. Waiting for what would happen by doing ethnography "behind closed doors" (Miller 2001), I asked myself what kind of objects, what kind of things would be put on display behind this door? I was looking down

at the doormat and its big colorful circles, which somehow seemed to fit the ornamentation of the staircase's tiled floor, when the light from inside gently brought the colors into being.

"Hello!" I was greeted, while I stepped inside. I found myself in the kitchen, typically for old flats of this kind, which are missing an entrance hall. So no 'rite de passage' materialized in brick and mortar as Rosselin (1999) illustrated by observing visitors entering and leaving a Parisian apartment, no room which was specifically decorated to welcome visitors (Miller 2001 for the English context). In this case, it was the kitchen where I was taking off my shoes, next to a kitchen table. What I immediately recognized was some kind of mixture of old and new furniture. There was this kitchen table with its plastic laminated top⁵ and its chrome legs, and a perfectly fitting chair next to it with its typical brownish vinyl upholstery. The kitchen unit in this fairly small room – two persons filled it out quite well – was a very modern appearing piece of furniture. A creamy white block with a massive oak top, on which a ceramic rectangular sink was sitting. No handles were disturbing the appearance of this cube. On the wall above the cube there were several wooden boxes – similar to old wine boxes – in different pastel colors holding pans, pots, and other kitchen gear. Although they looked fairly new, the colors indicated a production date a decade before the table unit. I put my shoes next to a stainless steel trough, where all sorts of shoes were sitting, and hung my jacket on the wardrobe. The latter consisted of a rope, into which a clever designer had embedded some sort of s-shaped hooks, so that it appeared as if only ropes with magically attached jackets were hanging down from the ceiling.

I followed Henriette into a room which eventually was the living room. "Some tea?" she asked and took out two teacups from a metal locker. It obviously had come into age, according to the sound of its door and the scratches on its creamy painted surface. While she went to boil some water a few meters back into the kitchen, I looked around the living room. Next to the locker, where the tableware was stored, was a big window, and in front of it a relatively long table was positioned facing its broadside against the wall. It had a solid wood oak top and a base made out of a raw steel frame. Four different chairs were placed around it. I knew all of them quite well from the furniture store I had worked with. They were more or less so called 'design furniture': One was a chair by the designer Harry Thaler for the company Moormann – a single piece of aluminum folded into a chair. Another was designed by Thomas Feichtner and produced by the company TON (pers. ref.).

I can still remember Thomas describing how this design came into being. He visited the TON factory, which had been the main factory of the Thonet company before World War I, to see what was technologically possible. There, the designer was astonished by their knowledge

⁵ Some of the German speaking readers will feel more familiar with the expression 'Resopal.' Resopal is a company which is still associated with the style of the 1950s and 1960s.

about bent wood, and to what extent they were producing furniture parts by themselves rather than – as usual for these industries – heavily relying on prefabricated parts from other producers. So, Thomas Feichtner came up with the idea to use all their knowledge and possibilities, and suggested to combine bent wood with a seating mould – they can even produce the latter themselves. For a meeting he provided several drawings, of which one fascinated the TON managers, because a detail reminded them of the old Thonet No. 14 chair⁶, still in production by TON. When the first prototypes were produced, the workers at the factory quickly found a nickname for the chair: The seating mould reminded them of the seats in Prague's tramways, which is why they started to call it 'tram chair', using the Czech word for tramway. Thomas quite liked the idea that the workers had come up with a name by themselves, so it went in production as 'Tram Chair' by Thomas Feichtner (pers. ref.).

Henriette came back from the kitchen and sat down on the sofa. Four cubic pieces covered in grey felt with green inlays standing in a L-shape, in front of them two stools which served as coffee tables. I placed myself on an old lounge chair of the 1950s covered in black vinyl, which had seen better days. Some metal parts were sticking out of it, and it seemed that a cat had used the chair to grind her claws. Behind me a sideboard was located in the style of so called Scandinavian design. With its wood and its drawers painted in black and grey it perfectly fitted the scenery of this room. And still, I had the Tram Chair in my sight, full of meaning, full of stories Thomas Feichtner had told me. Thinking about them I was wondering, if Henriette was aware of all the stories, and with what she would come up first. I was wondering, if she would speak about the bent wood detail representing the Thonet No. 14, or if she would mention the seating mould which represents the tramway seats in Prague and gives the chair its name. Wondering, how this piece of furniture functions like a vehicle to communicate herself to me.

"To me, the chair is too technoid in the end," Henriette said, when we talked about the Tram Chair's meaning. "If you look at the chair, you could assume that it is made of metal, although it consists of bent wood. The wooden structure is shining through a bit, yet it is the chair's black color, which makes it too rigid for me." (pers. ref.)

Clearly, Henriette and I had a different understanding of what the Tram Chair meant for each of us. While my understanding was informed by the designer's conception of the chair, Henriette's was grounded in her own, very personal interpretation. Saussure's semiotics had somewhat worked insofar as we both assumed that it is a chair which is meant for sitting. The chair was no sign which signified an idea Henriette and I shared. Rather, according to an intentional approach to meaning (Hall 1997), a social actor as Henriette has the possibility to

⁶ Thonet was one of the biggest players in furniture industries at the turn of the last century. The famous bent wood chair No. 14 is, with over 50 million produced items, still one of the most successful products of mass production. (Mang 1989)

create new meaning through speech by acting as an individual. Henriette's ideas were expressed to me by using words, another system of representation.

However, structuralist semiotics is concerned with the wider conception of meaning by differentiating between language and speech. As I have already mentioned, a chair in the kitchen had attracted my attention when I entered Henriette's flat. Let's use this chair and the Tram Chair to clarify my point. These two chairs differ according to their visual appearance – their 'style' –, although they are functionally identical pieces. One chair stands in Henriette's living room, the other one is located in her kitchen. Within a structuralist semiology the kitchen chair might not be associated with the same comfortableness as the chair in the living room's dining area. For this reason it is a kitchen chair, standing in binary opposition to the dining chair. According to the semiotic system of language (Barthes 1983), the kitchen chair does not only look different – and therefore has a different meaning –, but also it serves for a different purpose, and thus, is distinct from the dining chair. The kitchen chair might be used to have a small breakfast in the morning, while the 'Tram Chair' might be used for dinners with friends. However, Barthes (1983) also stressed the use of objects as a kind of speech which can modify language. Indeed, the ways the chairs are used, are not very different from each other – and, in fact, while working with the furniture shop, I saw 'Tram Chairs' used as kitchen chairs. But, to understand what Barthes intended, one has to investigate the transformation of meaning. For Barthes, a different use of an object (speech) can transform its meaning (in language, or within grammar). Let's think of two very distinct objects; a wooden ladder and a towel rack, for example. If the ladder were used as a towel rack, this would be a modification of language by speech, because some new meaning – the ladder as a towel rack – was introduced by its usage. However, this didn't happen in the case of the 'Tram Chair' – its function hadn't changed. So, Barthes further argued not to look at a single object, but rather on collections as he exemplified in his system of cars and furniture (Barthes 1983). Similarly, taking his favorite topic clothing as an example, he stated that a certain outfit "means long autumn walks in the woods" (Barthes 1983:43). In this sense, a collection of furniture as a whole carries meaning – or, as the German writer Christian Morgenstern assumed in the 19th century, 'Show me how you dwell, and I tell you who you are'. When I was sitting in Henriette's living room, we talked about the furniture she had purchased over the years. She had a collection of vintage furniture combined with new contemporary pieces. Henriette said the whole idea behind her flat was to combine old and new things. "We like to have very special pieces to be able to tell stories." (pers. ref.) Indeed, to see Henriette's whole flat carrying meaning insofar as it represents a combination of the old and the new, is a way to grasp meaning. Yet, at the very same time Henriette clearly expressed that the meaning of this

combination lies in 'very special pieces' of furniture. Pieces like the 'Tram Chair, through which she is 'able to tell stories', like the one about the chair's technoidity.

If I picture 'technoidity' as a kind of Barthes' myth (Barthes 1972) which effected the chair, I might have a rough guide. The chair could be labeled as so called 'design furniture'. It is sold only in some handpicked shops dealing with contemporary furniture offered for a respectable amount of money. It could be argued that it has the aura of being exclusive, handcrafted, more beautiful, having more value and, therefore, that the chair is 'naturally' more expensive than other chairs on the market. Certainly, this is a kind of myth, introduced by the marketing department of the manufacturer TON, by fairs and exhibitions, by museums curators and other institutions. These actors govern the myth and therefore also the object's meaning (Barthes 1972). This is where Hall (1997) argues that signification is always a struggle over meaning; in his sense, the meaning of the chair is not finished and never fixed. A press text by TON might try to govern the discourse in which meaning is created. As do other social actors, likewise the shop I worked with who marketed the chair. To promote it the sales assistants tried to give meaning to the chair by stressing the detail of the old Thonet No. 14. So, the meaning of the chair has to be understood within a signifying practice – as the work of representation. The detail in reminiscence of the old Thonet No. 14 chair is not existing prior, it has to be constructed through language as a signifying practice, before it is commonly agreed that it represents the Thonet No. 14. All the social actors involved with the chair's commercialization lay meaning into the object, which could be read off – although Henriette didn't do so.

Henriette told me a lot about her furniture this evening. Yet, these stories and the related meanings of furniture, like in the case of the 'Tram Chair, serve some kind of representation. Hence, in the very end I am still dealing with a Durkheimian approach here. To see objects which "bear names that indicate the noble and magical nature of the object that is offered" (Mauss 2002:35) as well as spatial arrangements in houses as concrete embodiments of an idea, privileges the idea over the material thing (Tilley 2006b). Here, meaning is always more important than an object itself or a collection of objects. The emphasis is on what an object – or a collection of objects – represents. From a semiotic perspective it could be argued that the things one dwells with serve as a kind of representation. Spatial arrangements (Cieraad 1999) represent a specific idea that is carried by pieces of furniture, which function as messengers of ideas (Hackenschmidt 2011). However, the case of the 'Tram Chair suggests that objects are not merely signs of an idea, but rather have to be understood within the social contexts they are positioned in – as in Henriette's flat, for example.

2.1.2. SEMIOTIC IDEOLOGIES

Another approach to the case of the Tram Chair can be grasped with what Webb Kaene is arguing for – through 'semiotic ideology', as he calls it. "Material signs in themselves, unaided by semiotic ideology and the various modalities of social regimentation, assert nothing." (Keane 2005:193) For him, "semiotic ideologies are thus concerned not just with signs per se but what kind of agentive subjects and acted-upon objects might be found in the world." (Keane 2005:191) Kaene grounds his argument on the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. In contrast to Saussure, for Peirce, the signifier and the signified are not inseparable. In his more holistic philosophical approach to the world, Peirce "classified signs according to the way they refer to objects in the environment" (Layton 2006:30). Peirce stated three types of reference: An indexical sign, which has something to do with what it refers to, for example, footprints of a human being in the sand. Icons, which "look like what they refer to. As long as we can 'read' the style, we can recognize what is depicted." (Layton 2006:30) And third, symbols, similar to words in language, which refer to objects purely on cultural conventions. In regard to the cantilever chair, the example Hackenschmidt was giving, this means: The chair itself would be an indexical sign, if it is just referring to sitting. Yet, since it is a specific chair with a specific style, in this case a streamline design, it could also function as an icon for streamline design, because humans – of course, not every human being, but art historians or other experts – are able to read such forms.

In contrast to the dualistic model of Saussure, Peirce offered a semiotic triangle consisting of a representamen, which is the form a sign could take (not necessarily material); an interpretant, which doesn't have to be confused with an interpreter, but has to be understood as the sense of the sign; and an object to which the sign refers to. This triadic model offers, in other words, a sign (representamen), a signified (interpretant) and an object (Layton 2006; Houser 1998). What distinguishes the Peircean notion from the Saussurian, besides that Peirce also includes an object in his system, is the dialogic thought, in the sense that the three parts interact with each other. "The Peircean model devotes to the range of relationships not only between signifier (sign) and signified (interpretant), but between both of those and (possible) objects of signification" (Keane 2003:413). To explain this a bit further, let me give an example by sticking to Henriette's Tram Chair. The object in this model is the chair itself; the representamen, the sign, is the chair's black color; and the signified is what makes the chair rigid for Henriette – technoidity. By using this model, the Tram Chair itself doesn't have to be infiltrated by some sort of myth to become, for instance, a signifier of modern furniture design. This also implies that the object as part of the triadic system can't function as simple reflector of meaning.

Keane is especially concerned with Peirce's notion of the 'qualisign'. A qualisign offers certain qualities which go beyond particular manifestations – for example, 'redness'. Red has to be embodied by something particular, for example an apple, but the apple has other qualities, too. In this context Keane points out Nancy Munn's (1992) work about the Melanesian connotation of 'lightness': "the qualisign of 'lightness', for instance, can pertain to canoes, garden plots, decorations, bodies, and so forth" (Keane 2003:414). Munn described the notions of 'lightness' and 'darkness' within Gawa society, where 'lightness' and 'speedness' are connected to men. On the other hand, 'darkness' is connected to the female and land. Canoes embody both parts, the male and the female. Yet, when canoes are adorned, the qualisign is lightness, indicating the travel of men and exchange (Munn 1992). In this sense, the qualisign has the mere potential of being in one object within a specific setting – likewise, when the Gawan canoes are adorned. "A qualisign is a quality in a sign. It can not actually act as a sign until it is embodied." (Houser et al. 1998:142) To use the Tram Chair example once more: Henriette's description of 'technoidity' functions as a qualisign. Technoidity has to be embodied in something, in an object. But it is not necessarily connected to the object. Similar to the Malinasian canoes, also the chair can embody different qualisigns.

A semiotic ideology therefore mediates the relations between words or ideas and things, different from the "demand that we divide our attention and choose between ideas and things" (Keane 2003:410). The object is as important as the idea connected with it, and it is the relationship that matters. In this sense, Keane is clearly following a material culture approach, and touches here one of the fundamental assumptions of social science. Max Weber defined interpretative sociology by excluding "those aspects of the objective world that did not enter directly into internal actions" (Keane 2005:198). In other words, everything which is not part of a social interaction between humans, is not part of social science. Keane is questioning this view with his semiotic ideology, and illustrates his critique by exemplifying the case of clothes (Keane 2005). Within a representational view, clothes are symbols or function as signs for social relations. But what, if the clothes were taken off? What, if we wanted to describe, in a Weberian sense, just what is underneath them, what they are representing, what they are standing for? Using the Peircean model, Keane argues that underneath the clothes one can't find anything such as society or social relations (Keane 2005). The clothes themselves, as material objects, are needed within social relations – we are not just dressed, rather, we are constituted by the clothes we wear. Therefore, a semiotic ideology can be seen as a cultural system of ideas and assumptions about the world, in which agentive subjects, meaning acting subjects, and acted-upon objects build the context. Certain qualities require an object to be embodied, but "before an object of signification can be specified, something must be first

specified as a sign. And in the process, its objects must be determined to be objects." (Kaene 2003:423)

Kaene's semiotic ideology differs from Barthes' system of furniture and cars (1983) in so far as for Kaene, long autumn walks – to stick to Barthes' analogy – wouldn't exist without a specific outfit. For the qualisign requires an object to be embodied, and in this process the object is determined to be an object. This understanding goes beyond representation, since the "character of things is neither subordinated to, nor isolated from, communication and thought" (Kaene 2005:183). This doesn't mean that the object which embodies a qualisign is representing a thought, but rather that objects are equally part of our social actions as are ideas. Kaene tries to diminish the gap between the two entities subject and object, and argues that we cannot simply ask for the meaning of things in an ethnographic setting, rather, "we must be attentive to the ways in which they are regimented and brought into relation to other things." (Kaene 2005:193) Thus, Henriette's furniture, and especially the Tram Chair I am dealing with, helps to mediate the relationship between ideas about the chair and the chair itself. By placing this chair into her flat, Henriette brought the chair in relation with other objects; she brought it into play between old and new furniture and is therefore mediating the idea behind the flat – 'technoidity' vs. 'good old times', as she expressed.

Kaene takes into account that clothes as well as the chair can embody different qualities at the same time, just as Henriette and I had a different understanding of what the Tram Chair means. This is because these qualities are not per se inherent to the chair itself – since meaning is never finished and never fixed, as Hall (1997) argues. For there is always a struggle over meaning – or, in other words, to keep on with Kaene's example of redness: who defines that 'hex triplet #FF0000' is red? –, defining red is a dynamic relation, in which material objects intervene (Kaene 2003, 2005). I have gained this insight from Kaene's argument of stressing the notion of the qualisign, which cannot actually act until it is embodied in a specific situation – for example, me sitting in Henriette's living room and asking about the meaning of the Tram Chair. Thus, asking about meaning, assuming like Morgenstern 'Show me how you dwell, and I tell you who you are', doesn't assert anything. Within semiotic thinking traditions Kaene offers a wider conception by arguing for semiotic ideology, which places a greater emphasis on things. One where things are not just representations of ideas, but where things mediate social relations. Which is leading me to the question what objects *do*.

2.2. WHAT OBJECTS DO

In the previous section I tried to show that within the structuralist semiotic tradition there is always an opposition between humans and objects, stressing objects in terms of representations. These approaches "stress the significance of objects and their relation to social action in relation to cognition and symbolization" (Tilley 2006b:7), and carry the understanding that material culture can be treated as a form of text which could be read. Similar to an early Geertz approach to understand culture as text (1977), where concepts and ideas are projected onto objects and carry meanings which one could read off. Now, in this section I want to focus on something different. Namely, on a so called 'hybrid approach' (Verbeek 2012) towards objects, "where humans and nonhumans are treated as belonging to the same ontological category." (Verbeek 2012:167) This understanding allows me to ask what things *do*, because I am treating objects as having the possibility to be social, too.

It was Arjun Appadurai (1986), who first claimed that material things also have a social life. His edited collection *The social Life of Things* (1986) drew attention to the ways in which objects were shifted from one sociocultural context to another and were therefore constantly recontextualized. Relying on the the exchange of gifts, Appadurai shifted the focus away from the human character of exchange towards the social lives of things themselves. Commodities are therefore understood not so much as specific types of things, but rather as specific types of situations. He proposes that "the commodity situation in the social life of any 'thing' be defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (...) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature." (Appadurai 1986:13) Hence, a commodity situation in the life of things occurs, when things move in and out of these situations. Things are seen as in motion and so, "we have to follow things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. (...) Through the analysis of these trajectories (...) we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things. Thus, even though from a theoretical point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a methodological point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context." (Appadurai 1986:5) Appadurai calls for a study of the paths things take and life histories these things gain through commodity spheres. Social lives reveal that "the commodity is not one kind of thing rather than another, but one phase in the life of some things" (Appadurai 1986:17). By viewing things as social beings – having a social life – Appadurai is "engaged with the idea that persons and things are not radically distinct categories, and that the transactions that surround things are invested with the properties of social relations." (Appadurai 2006:15) Following Appadurai's thought, it is not only human beings but also things which take an active part in social contexts and are able to constitute new social contexts.

2.2.1. OBJECTS WITH AGENCY

While I was sitting in Henriette's living room on the old club chair, I realized that by asking for meaning I wouldn't get any further. So, I attained a different approach towards material culture. One, in which the separation of words and objects, as Kaene (2003, 2005) put it, is not existing. One, into which I can incorporate all the objects of Henriette's social life. Hence, a concept of thought where the furniture is part of Henriette's social relations.

Henriette went on with her explanations about the Tram Chair. "It is a very masculine piece of furniture, in the end a typical Thomas Feichtner piece. Basically, I like to have things around me of which I know the authors in person. Certainly less when it comes to furniture, as it happens with artworks." (pers. ref.)

Indeed, in Henriette's flat many artworks covered the walls. Not copies of famous paintings, but drawings and sculptures by young Viennese artists, as I learned later on. Looking around her flat, in every angle an artwork appeared.

"I know less designers in person than I know artists," Henriette went on. "I kind of really like to know the persons and their conceptual worlds out of which these objects emerge." (pers. ref.)

Seen from this angle, the notion of technoidity – to recall: Henriette described the Tram Chair as 'technoid' earlier in our conversation – appears in a different light. In the sense that the Tram Chair is not a sign for technoidity, but can rather be seen as an objectification of Thomas Feichtner's conceptual world.

"To me, Thomas' work is very functional, yet at the same time charged with masculine poesy – technoid, but nevertheless cheerful. Indeed, there is a poetic moment in this chair, when it comes to the material. The chair looks as it were a metal construction, but because the chair is actually made out of wood, there is a kind of poesy twinkling through." (pers. ref.)

In this sense, the Tram Chair doesn't gain its meaning through being a sign, but objectifies the conceptual world of Thomas Feichtner. It was Alfred Gell (1998) who argued that by looking at objects we have access to the embedded agency they contain, and that we can interfere with this agency. Gell's concept of agency was directed to arts, with the intention to move away from a theory of aesthetics towards a theory of the effects art has. However, Gell's theory offered a wider consideration of objects, giving the example of a chipped stone. The example goes like this: Strolling along a beach, Gell finds a chipped stone. "Is it perhaps a prehistoric hand-axe? It has become an artifact and hence qualifies consideration. It is a tool, hence an idea of agency." (Gell 1998:16) Although this chipped stone might not be considerable within a theory of art – it might not even be a piece of a prehistoric hand-axe – through taking it

home and using it "as an ornament for my mantelpiece (...) it has become an index of my agency." (Gell 1998:16) For Gell, agency is therefore something which is not inherent to an object, not given in advance, but something "artifacts acquire once they become enmeshed in a texture of social relationships." (Gell 1998:17) Let us have a look at the example of cars and the relationship human beings might have to them. Gell argues: "a car, just as a possession and a means of transport is not intrinsically a locus of agency, either the owner's agency or its own. But it is in fact very difficult for a car owner not to regard a car as a body part (...) something invested with his or her social agency vis-a-vis other social agents." (Gell 1998:18) Similarly, it happens with furniture. During our conversation Henriette was not only facing me with her body, but also with the objects in her possession. Though, "the car does not just reflect the owner's personhood, it has a personhood as a car," (Gell 1998:18) Gell argues. The story of his Toyota – "or Olly for short" (Gell 1998:18) – illustrates how cars can act like agents in particular social situations, by considering them 'sensible' (as Gell does in case of his Olly) or accusing them of gross treachery, if they break down in the middle of the night. This kind of 'vehicular animism' is shared by myself, too. Also my Volvo has a name – it's called 'Leopold' – and since it is rather old, it needs much care. When some noise appears which my car hasn't made before, I don't consider it as my fault, in the sense of poor maintenance. No, I accuse the car for being cruel to me by producing a new problem I have to fix. Within these situations the car becomes an agent – or, more precisely, points towards an agent.

Objects function as agents "only in so far as I am a 'patient' (...) the counterpart of an agent" (Gell 1998:22). Agency in Gell's understanding is always relational – "for any agent there is a patient, and conversely for any patient, there is an agent. (...) Social agents who may be persons, things, animals, divinities, in fact, anything at all. All this is stipulated is that with respect to any given transaction between 'agents' one agent is exercising agency while the other is (momentarily) a 'patient'." (Gell 1998:22). With this consideration Gell diminishes the separation between subjects and objects, since anything has the possibility to have agency; persons as well as things like cars or furniture. "Social agency is not defined in terms of 'basic' biological attributes (such as inanimated thing vs. incarnated person) but is relational – it does not matter in ascribing 'social agent' status, what a thing (or a person) 'is' in itself; what matters is where it starts in a network of social relations." (Gell 1998:123) If my car did not make any noise for a certain period of time, it would be strange to have nothing to maintain – the car would lose its personality as *my* car with a specific name and therefore its agency. Cars, just as furniture items, are not per se social agents. If my car was working smoothly, or if nobody asked questions about pieces of furniture in Henriette's flat, there would be no agents, because objects are a 'nexus' of social relations. A patient is needed to whom an object could act – just as me listening to a car, or a spectator looking at an art work. In Gell's theory, "spectatorship is

seen as a form of agency, even though the spectator role simultaneously involves the passive registering of a 'given' art object." (Gell 1998:34)

Yet, what is important in Gell's theory is that agency is mediated by indexes. An index is, in short, a material object or a visual image which motivates a kind of response – as it may be my car's cruelty or every other kind of interpretation. Gell borrows the term index from Peircean semiotics, where, to recall, an index is an entity from which the observer can make causal inference. For example, smoke as an index referring to fire – "an entity from which the observer can make a causal inference of some kind, or an inference about the intentions of another person." (Gell 1998:13) Another example for an index provided by Gell "is the human smile, indexing a friendly attitude" (Gell 1998:13). In a picture of a person smiling (index) a viewer attributes friendliness onto the person in the picture. Now, one could abduct – another term Gell borrows from semiotic theory – agency from a picture in which a person is smiling. Within artistic agency, Gell argues that "the index usually motivates the abduction of the agency of the person who made it. The index is, in these instances, a congealed 'trace' of the artist's creative performance." (Gell 1998:33) An example would be Jackson Pollock's 'drip' paintings, which have "no subject at all except the agency of Jackson Pollock himself." (Gell 1998:33) For Gell, visual-aesthetic properties are less important than the physical interventions of an artist. He is not interested in what an art work represents, but rather in the actions caused by prior intentions connected to the art work. Yet, these actions are not exclusively bound to the artist – as, for example, in Francisco de Goya's portrait of the Duke of Wellington. It is not just Goya's agency in the sense of creative performance which can be abducted from the index, since Goya "could not produce a picture of a little girl with golden curls and tell the world that this represents the Duke" (Gell 1998:35). The Duke functions here as a 'prototype'; as an object, or in this case a person the index represents. A prototype "has (...) visual characteristics, and these are part of the 'causal milieu' which the artist exploits, and contends with in producing (as a primary agent) an index which will trigger 'recognition' as a representation" (Gell 1998:37). In this sense, the Duke is a secondary agent, "permitting the manifestation of the primary agency of the artist" (Gell 1998:35). Yet, in both cases of Pollack and Goya, it is the fascination of artistic production that matters. Gell finds empirical evidence in Trobriand cone prow-boards used in the context of Kula exchange. "These boards are richly carved and painted, and they are the first thing that the 'Trobrianders' oversea exchange-partners get to see when the 'Trobriand flotilla arrives on their shores (...) The purpose of these beautiful carvings is to demoralize the opposition, so that they will lose the capacity to drive hard bargains" (Gell 1998:69). These prow-boards function as an index of artistic agency insofar that, for the Trobrianders, these boards as magical. "Artistic agency, especially of the virtuous character so obviously present in the Trobriand carving is socially efficacious because

it establishes an inequality between the agency responsible for the production of the world of art and the spectators; in the Trobriands this inequality is attributed to superior magic; in the West to artistic inspiration and genius." (Gell 1998:71)

Let me once again consider the example of the 'Tram Chair' designed by Thomas Feichtner. Henriette likes to have objects around her of which she knows the author in person. Besides the artworks in her possession the 'Tram Chair' is an example for furniture. Since the 'Tram Chair', just as Henriette's art objects, functions according to Gell like an index for the agency of Thomas Feichtner's artistic production. Not in terms that the chair represented the designer's mindset and virtuosity, or, magic, as in the Trobriand example – Gell's theory is highly non-representational. According to him, the abduction of agency is only possible within social relations. This means Henriette has to act upon the chair, in describing it as 'technoid', for instance, or defining Thomas Feichtner's agency as 'masculine' and 'poetic'. Yet, the described social relations could either be Henriette viewing one of her artworks, where she is in the role of the patient and the artwork is in the role of the agent, or she reflects upon the 'Tram Chair' while I am sitting in her living room, where I am in the role of the patient whereas Henriette is in the role of the agent – in the sense that she is acting through objects in her surroundings. Although these two settings have a different kind of patient – on the one hand it is the agency acted through the artwork putting Henriette in the position of the patient, on the other hand it is Henriette's agency which is acted out and putting me in the position of the patient –, in both situations objects play an important role. Both situations picture a social relation – however, in the first one the object is seen as a subject. The chair itself cannot actually act, neither do cars or artworks. Rather, they cause the viewer of an artwork, the driver of a car recognizing some strange new noise or Henriette owning the 'Tram Chair' to act in return within and on social relations (Gell 1998). Objects therefore function as subjects because humans abduct agency from them.

It was criticized that Gell operates with "complex, scientific looking formula to express the way in which the different terms [prototype, index, artist, recipient] in an art nexus can exercise greater or lesser agency according to context" (Bowden 2004:311), instead of "saying that viewers create inferences from artworks about the status, power and intention of people who created and displayed them" (Bowden 2004:309). Also the ways in which Gell approaches art were criticized. Although Gell was aware that the concept of art is not a universal category and found only in certain societies, Ross Bowden points out that "although Gell rejects the need to define 'art' he nevertheless reveals in passing what he believes the characteristic of artworks to be. Artworks display 'technical expertise'" (Bowden 2004:323), for instance. These assumptions about what objects in general communicate and represent were also criticized by Howard Morphy. In this context Morphy asks, "Does cultural background and knowledge of art affect

a person's interpretation and response to a portrait?" (Morphy 2009:10) When Gell was discussing the 'secondary agent', he compared Hyacinthe Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV – in which Louis XIV is presented as he wished to look like and is therefore a secondary agent – to Donald Sutherland's portrait of Winston Churchill. Churchill did not like the portrait, since according to Gell, it looked too much like him, and Churchill was unable to come to terms with his own ugliness (Gell 1998). Yet, Morphy asks "What is the basis for attributing ugliness to Churchill?" (Morphy 2009:10) The basis for such assumptions would be a theory of representation, "because abduction of agency in the form of indexical signs requires a theory of signs in order to show the senses in which they are indexical" (Morphy 2009:10). Although Gell is operating with semiotic terminology by using the terms index and abduction, he is not at all concerned with a theory of signs. Rather, "Gell pays a great deal of attention to ways in which objects can be seen or thought to have agency. In these analyses he is not examining the objects merely as indexes from which meaning is abducted but as complex entities that can be analysed from a multiplicity of different perspectives, all of which contribute to understanding how in the particular case, objects can be thought to have agency." (Morphy 2009:12) Morphy points out that "in relation to meaning Gell's 'theory' oversimplifies and privileges social action" (Morphy 2009:20), and is therefore "excluding aesthetics and semiotics." (Morphy 2009:22) Indeed, the theory provided by Gell (1999) is in every sense an anthropological theory of social relations. "Anthropological theories are distinctive in that they are typically about social relationships (...). The study of relationships (...) allowed anthropologists to perform their allotted intellectual task, which is to explain why people behave as they do, even if this behavior seems irrational, or cruel, or amazingly saintly and disinterested, as may be. The aim of anthropological theory is to make sense out of behavior in the context of social relations. Correspondingly, the objective of the anthropological theory of art is to account for the production and circulation of art objects as a function of this relational context." (Gell: 1999:11)

Gell stresses the point that objects are significant not only in relation to what they *mean* – which would be a semiotic perspective, as I stated earlier – but also to what they *do*. How they exert influence by altering the mind of others. Yet, Gell's idea about 'distributed personhood' (Gell 1998) has very little to do with the idea that Thomas Feichtner's mind is objectified in the Tram Chair, but with the idea that traces of the designer's agency are left within the material world. For Gell, "objectification processes are bound up not only with the agency of persons but with the agency of things in relation to the persons" (Tilley 2006:63). It is the Tram Chair which has agency, and which stands for a person's extensions in the world. Gell was interested in the role of the manufacturer – the artist, the designer. Therefore, the

Tram Chair objectifies the relations and skills of production of Thomas Feichtner, but not Thomas Feichtner's mind. The latter would be a form of representation.

Gell's theory is often accused of standing with one foot – if not with both feet – in an anthropomorphic tradition, in which "art works are manifestations of 'culture' as a collective phenomenon, they are, like people, enculturated beings." (Gell 1998:153) Daniel Miller, for instance, argues that art works as "creative products of a person or people become their 'distributed mind' which turns their agency into their effects, as influences upon the mind of others. (...) So Gell's is a theory of natural anthropomorphism, where our primary reference point is to people and their intentionality behind the world of artifacts." (Miller 2005:13) I wouldn't entirely agree with Miller that Gell's theory is some kind of "looking through objects to the embedded human agency" (Miller 2005:13). Indeed, Gell's theory has some touch of anthropomorphism, when objects become the 'distributed mind of their creator'. To take once again the example of me accusing my car when it produces a strange noise: in this situation I abduct agency from my car, and thus, it becomes person-like. So, Gell's theory often tends to be about the social agency of objects in a representational manner – "for Gell, objects can only have effect as representations of others' minds and agency. This, then is at heart a representational theory of meaning (...) objects that have the effect of agents in systems of generative relations between persons." (Leach 2007:181–182) James Leach – a very close reader of Gell – objects to the representational use of Gell's theory that we shall see it as it was intended to be: particularly *non*-representational. That "we should treat an object as an index of something else." (Leach 2007:182) In Leach' study about a collaborative project between artists and scientists he argues that "one way of looking at artists and scientists squabbling over who should be credited is to see them as locked into a model where it is the abduction of agency that is what matters about an object (...). Once one refuses abduction and says that agency belongs to the art object, or in other words admits that the art object has a life of its own (...) then the squabble appears ridiculous." (Leach 2007:182) Indeed, Gell's theory offers a way to perceive objects as "produced to influence the thoughts and actions of others. Even those objects which seem to be without a directly identifiable function (...) are in fact made in order to act upon the world and to act upon other persons. Material objects thus embody complex intentionalities and mediate social agency." (Hoskins 2006:75) Rather than things representing their creators, or carrying their own agency, like in Leach' example, Gell's concept of art objects having agency is one where objects have the "ability to challenge us and captivate us visually" (Hoskins 2006:77).

In this sense, the case of the Tram Chair appears differently to us. Rather than being concerned with the mind of its creator, the agency is concerned with the ability of the object. The ability that Henriette labels the object as 'technoid', 'masculine' and 'poetic'. The agency of

the object which forces her to act upon; to buy it in the first place and to reincorporate it into her social context, later. Even if Henriette sees the mind of Thomas Feichtner embodied in the chair, it is not the designer who acts in this social relation, rather, it is the the chair itself which carries agency.

2.2.2. AGENCY WITHIN A NETWORK

A different approach to agency is offered by Bruno Latour. Primarily concerned with a critique of the dualism between science and society, he showed that the world entirely consists of a hybridity impossible to disentangle by entities like natural laws and human actions (Latour 1993). Latour's work became especially fruitful for anthropology by addressing interconnections between humans and material objects in science, like machines, animals, plants and so on, with his so called 'actor-network theory'. "At the heart of actor-network theory (ANT) lies an attempt to dissolve any categorical distinction between people and non-human social actors, both of which are reduced to a single category of 'actants'." (Vokes 2013: 523). Latour draws attention to the complex ways in which humans constantly shape and re-shape each other, as well as other actants, like objects, also shape human bodies and social domains (Latour 1993). According to him, these interactions are so fundamental that it doesn't make any sense to privilege humans over non-humans. "If action is limited a priori to what 'intentional', 'meaningful' humans do, it is hard to see how a hammer, a basket, a door closer, a cat, a rug, a mug, a list, or a tag could act. They might exist in the domain of 'material' 'causal' relations, but not in the 'reflexive' 'symbolic' domain of social relations." (Latour 2005:71) For Latour, everything is an actant and active within ANT – "any thing that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor – or, if it has no figuration yet, an actant." (Latour 2005:71) In this sense, ANT can be defined as "the name of a movement, a displacement, a transformation, a translation, an enrollment. It is an association between entities which are in no way recognizable as being social in the ordinary manner, except during the brief moment when they are reshuffled together." (Latour 2005:64–65) In no way this complies with Leach' argument that agency belongs to (art) objects, because Latour stresses the point that agency does neither belong to humans nor to non-humans – that it is not some kind of individual act per se. Rather, agency is what makes things happen, distributed throughout a network of actants.

To give an example: Latour drives a car which produces a signal tone and a warning light in case he hasn't fastened his seatbelt while driving. Since Latour doesn't like to wear his seatbelt, the alarm is constantly reminding him of doing so (Latour 2008). It would come too short to say the seatbelt has agency. Or to state that agency can be abducted, as Gell suggested. Neither

the engineers who came up with the device, nor the policemen who might stop Latour for not having fastened his seatbelt, nor the law which enables the policemen to do so – according to Latour, none of them could be clearly identified of having agency. Rather, all of them – if not even more entities – are forming a network within this situation: Latour owning a car with such a device and not willing to fasten the belt, the law, the policemen, the engineers, and so forth. This specific situation has agency and makes Latour fasten his seatbelt. Different from Leach' approach, a non-human thing, an object, does not have agency per se, rather, agency is carried out within specific situations. Latour describes ANT's logic the following way. "ANT states that if we wish to be a bit more realistic about social ties (...) we have to accept that the continuity of any course of action will rarely consist of human-to-human connections (for which the basic social skills would be enough anyway) or of object-object connections, but will probably zigzag from one to the other." (Latour 2005:76) Instead of following a straight forward ontological approach, Latour identifies different actants – a quite technical term – rather than agents. But within (social) situations, or rather actions, agency is observable either on the human or on the non-human side. Eventually, non-humans, or things, may be entangled in social events in a limitless range.

Rather than applying the ANT to the topic of dwelling – obviously an interesting task to do – I will focus on the theoretical insights concerning the object in Latour's thinking. Therefore, I want to stress another aspect which has to do with the transfer of agency onto things, shown by Latour with the example of the striking groom (Latour 2008). A groom is a technical device which closes a door automatically, a task that a human porter once had. According to Latour, human practices and tasks were transformed to a non-human being. To keep a door properly shut, the practice of a porter, who had been disciplined to fulfill his task, was transformed to a technical device, a groom. But what, if the groom is not working? If the groom is on strike, as Latour read on a note? "So not only have we been able to delegate the act of closing the door from the human to the nonhuman, we have also been able to delegate the human lack of discipline," (Latour 2008:159) Latour states. According to Latour, sociologists – and also some anthropologists, I would like to add – would criticize it as anthropomorphism, "when you write that a groom is 'on strike', this is only seen as a 'projection', as they say, of a human behavior onto a nonhuman, cold, technical object, one by nature impervious to any feeling." (Latour 2008:159–160) Now, for Latour, the groom is actually anthropomorphic through and through "in three senses: first, it has been made by humans; second, it substitutes for the actions of people and is a delegate that permanently occupies the position of a human; and third, it shapes human action by prescribing back what sort of people should pass through the door." (Latour 2008:60) So the groom as an anthropomorphic, non-human thing can only arise out of the distinction between human and non-human. Since Latour is rejecting any 'modern'

distinction between humans and nature (Latour 1993), the groom may also gain a kind of agency entirely independent from any human intentionality, by generating completely new forms of human behavior. Who has never struggled with a groom closing a door too fast or forcing one to exert much more effort to open a door than usually? In this sense, Latour allows agency to be distributed throughout the network of actants, either by being projected on to, by being transferred to, or by simply resting in objects. Agency for Latour is not, as Gell put it, an effectuation of human intention, but a property of networks of relationships.

Stepping into a wider consideration of the relationships between objects and humans, away from car seat belts and door stoppers, I would like to cite Richard Vokes' application of Latour's ANT to toilet facilities in Uganda. Vokes describes various implications of actants within his example of toilet facilities. "Firstly, and most obviously, it reorganizes the residence's built environment, by introducing an entirely new structure, of prescribed location and dimensions, as a permanent store for human waste. Moreover, from the time the first latrines were constructed onwards, these structures were understood to have brought the agency of their 'designer' (in this case the colonial administration) into the home." (Vokes 2013:535) The colonial administration also plays a part in political dimensions, since Vokes observes that "the quality of a dwelling's latrine has become a key marker of its owner's political standing" (Vokes 2013:537). Moreover, through their construction the latrines themselves also became actants regarding the way households and villages are organized. For "in a residence (...) the rooms within one dwelling were significantly rearranged following the construction of a new pit latrine, in order to ensure that the household head's main bedroom was as close to that toilet as possible (...). This rearranging of rooms had a most peculiar effect on the overall layout of rooms inside that particular dwelling." (Vokes 2013:537–538) By rearranging all the rooms in the dwelling, it now becomes hard for visitors to find the main entrance, and it is inevitable to step into the more private rooms of the house (Vokes 2013). To my understanding, Vokes gives an excellent example of how Latour's ANT is working. Objects, like latrines, can also act within a network of other actants. Similarly, Vokes shows how humans who want to be as close as possible to the toilet facility act upon other actants, like visitors. In this sense, Latour doesn't put objects in the role of human projections onto non-human things, but as standing in constant interaction with humans. Yet, an interaction which "is not done under the full control of consciousness; action should rather be felt as a node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled. It is this venerable source of uncertainty that we wish to render vivid again in the odd expression of actor-network." (Latour 2005:44) Likewise, Vokes disentangled agency within a set of toilet facilities, settlements and socio-political beings, whether they are human or non-human – all being active parts within a network.

In regard to the 'Tram Chair' case, many different actants could be identified. There is Henriette as the owner of the chair, Thomas Feichtner as the chair's designer, the chair itself, all the other pieces of furniture in the room, me as a MA student asking questions, other visitors, and so on. Throughout this network there is agency – the capacity – to act. However, I am not disentangling some kind of network here – I rather seek to understand Latour's insights in regard to what objects do within dwelling. The main argument here, in answer to what objects do, is: nothing at all at its core, since they don't possess any agency. Rather, agency is distributed throughout a network in specific situations. Latour is breaking down the distinction between subjects and objects, since both can equally be found within a network – in specific social situations, where both are equally engaged. Objects themselves, strictly speaking, don't do anything – yet as they do everything.

Latour provides us with his theory a radical philosophical conception of subject and objects. If we picture philosophy as a wheel, "this wheel consists of the circular process at which level we cannot differentiate either subjects per se or objects per se." (Miller 2005:14) As anthropologists, we can either try to put spokes into the wheel, "or remove various spokes from this philosophical wheel" (Miller 2005:14) in order to grasp theoretically what our interlocutors are doing and trying to tell us – in other words, to provide us with some sense of their actions in their worlds. But, "anthropology always incorporates an engagement that starts from the opposite position to that of philosophy. A position taken from its empathetic encounter with the least abstracted and most fully engaged practices of the various peoples of the world. In this encounter we come down from the philosophical heights and strive for the very vulgarity that philosophy necessarily eschews. We may often find ourselves conducting research among people for whom 'common-sense' consists of a clear distinction between subjects and objects defined by their opposition." (Miller 2005:14) Miller argues here for a stronger ethic approach to our discipline. Rather than using philosophy as a starting point and reinventing the philosophical wheel where one can't distinguish between objects and subjects, instead of showing "that we can be philosophers, we need the courage to refuse this ambition and return to ethnographic empathy and ordinary language." (Miller 2005:15) This is not an argument for 'grounded theory' (Glaser et al. 1999) – developing theories out of ethnographic data –, but rather for linking the ethnographic body to philosophy. Taking on an ethic approach instead of an emic one means not to verify philosophy in my field, but rather to make use of theory to explain the phenomena I came across. Although my car has a name, and I have picked up with a striking groom, I have to step back once again and ask in a more general way what things *are* in the field of dwelling.

2.3. WHAT THINGS ARE

In this chapter, I will ask what objects *are*. For this, I will focus on the concept of 'objectification', since "an objectification perspective provides an answer to both (...) questions, as it is to do with what things are and what things do in the social world: the manner in which objects or material forms are embedded in the life worlds of individuals, groups, institutions or, more broadly, culture and society." (Tilley 2006:60) While some concepts rely on the understanding of objectification as an embodiment of an idea, some others indicate a shift – often labeled as the 'material turn' (Hicks 2010) – within material culture towards a different understanding of objectification. This understanding "attempts to overcome the dualism in modern empiricist thought in which subjects and objects are regarded as utterly different and opposed entities" (Tilley 2006:61). Entities in the sense like Max Weber defined empirical sociology, divided into human actions and natural objects. Especially, Daniel Miller in his book titled *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Miller 1998) argued that "things are not just objectifications at the point of their production, but throughout their life cycles in moments of exchange, appropriation and consumption. Objects circulate through people's activities and can contextually produce new types of activities and events." (Tilley 2006:60) To get a deeper insight into the process of objectification, I shall focus on Miller's dialectal outline of this concept (Miller 1998, 2010). So let's go back to Henriette's flat and use a different example than the Tram Chair.

When I stayed with Henriette, we talked about her furniture and how her living room was decorated. About the table and the chairs around it, the lighting, the bookshelf, her collection of glass vases on the window sill, and the sideboard which appeared to me to be a piece of Scandinavian design.

"The sideboard is a gap filler for me, because it was the last piece of furniture which was missing to make the living room complete. It was very important to me, not in the sense of how it looked like ... just to have a piece of furniture to close this gap after years. The truth is that I had to get used to it, to its form and its dimensions, but look at it! The black and the grey of its drawers perfectly go together with the black chair and the grey chair next to it. It's incorporating itself nicely into the room. It is a piece of furniture with which I want to spend many years. I like the materials used, I like to touch the wood, I find it funny that all of a sudden plastic appears when you open the drawers ..." (pers. ref.)

Henriette told me nothing about Scandinavian design. Nothing about the fact that the sideboard is actually a piece from the 1950s by the Czech designer Jiří Jiroutek, and therefore a piece which could nicely represent the idea to convey political ideology through furniture and furniture arrangements during socialism (Buchli 1999) – if it were just seen as objectification at

the point of production. Yet, no kind of Jiroutek's agency was abducted from it. Neither does this old sideboard stand for anything, nor can anything be read off this piece of furniture. For Henriette, the sideboard is a 'gap filler', something – as she nicely rephrased – she hadn't appreciated in the beginning. This statement shows that Henriette's sideboard experienced a change – a process in which the 'gap filler' became a piece which 'incorporates itself nicely'. The episode could also be described as a process of objectification. As a transformation by which the sideboard was brought into being as a piece she likes and which gives her pleasure. Henriette told me, for instance, how the decoration on the sideboard had changed. She rearranged everything which had been standing on the previous piece of furniture; vases standing there were put on the window still, other decoration items found their new place in the storage room. Receiving new fellow items around it, only the cubic radio remained on its place.

2.3.1. OBJECTIFICATION

In an article about moving furniture in Norwegian households Pauline Garvey adopted an approach which "recasts the significance of home decoration from the results of home decoration to the process of these routines." (Garvey 2001:48) As she shows in one example, "moving furniture has a cathartic quality in taking control of the material environment." (Garvey 2001:57) Garvey argues that "the domestic raw materials that ordinary feed normative expectations to the social self become suddenly playful and alterable, significant because of their triviality." (Garvey 2001:66) Similar to Henriette's sideboard, which just served normative expectations in form of a piece of furniture which might give additional storage and completes her living room. Not only the object becomes meaningful, but also Henriette's ideas become mutable in the sense that she admires the sideboard and pictures it staying with her for a longer period of time. The sideboard with its oak veneered corpus and the black and grey painted drawers hasn't changed. Neither has Henriette's idea of what the meaning of the sideboard is – still, it is a 'gap filler' for her. But over time, the sideboard has been objectifying something different, something which according to Henriette 'incorporates itself nicely' into the room. This example shows that in Henriette's case, the sideboard as a 'domestic raw material' is something which transformed itself, something which she likes to stay with, something which alters through the process of objectification.

To understand the conception of this process of objectification in the given example, one has to go back to Miller's concept and his extractions especially from the philosophies of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx and Georg Simmel. Although the term objectification is widely used within the discipline of anthropology, Miller offers a distinct, not to say eclectic,

conception which is partly relying on the Hegelian notion of 'Entäußerung' and partly on Marx' concept of 'Vergegenständlichung'.⁷ Therefore, it seems to be important to recall Miller's concept of objectification and the extractions he applied to it. "Hegel suggests that there can be no fundamental separation between humanity and materiality – that everything that we are and do arises out of the reflection upon ourselves given by the mirror image of the process by which we create form and are created by the same process." (Miller 2005:8) In *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel (1986) is concerned with knowledge and the question of how one can seek for absolute knowledge without having a criterion of what it is. Therefore, Hegel characterizes different stages of consciousness as historical processes. On each stage, the consciousness is aware of something, but at the same time it distinguishes the knowledge as being different from what it already knows. By distinguishing knowledge from consciousness, this alienated knowledge gets a concrete form or even becomes an object – self alienated⁸ from the consciousness. Reversely, this means that every object is also a product of consciousness. On the final stage, the object is spiritualized, because the consciousness will have absolute knowledge of the object and will recognize that the object is nothing other than itself. "Once the Hegelian subject understands not only the manner in which it externalizes itself and reappropriates this externalization, but also the trajectory of its own increasing understanding of this process, it comes to the final realization that it is itself the product of this process, an understanding it can achieve only by going through every stage of this developing awareness culminating in a profound comprehension of the rational nature of the world." (Miller 1998:25) What Miller is interested in, are the processes of externalization and sublation – when the subject externalizes itself "in a creative act of differentiation, and in turn reappropriates this externalization" (Miller 1998:28) through the process of 'sublation' ('Aufhebung'), the mainspring in Hegel's dialectic process. Whereas Hegel uses the term to point out the positive connotations in the moment of self-alienation, Miller uses sublation in the way that it "eliminates the separation of the subject from its creation but does not eliminate the creation itself" (Miller 1998:25). Within this understanding Hegel offers for Miller a "non-reductionist and dynamic subject-object relation" (Miller 1998:28), and provides Miller a theory of culture. "A theory of culture can have no independent subject, as neither individuals nor societies can be considered as its originators, since both are inseparable from culture itself and are as much constituted by culture as constituting it." (Miller 1998:33)

The next important figure in Miller's theory is Marx. "It was Karl Marx who claimed that Hegel had discovered something quite profound, but had made a fundamental mistake in

⁷ Miller points out that according to Chris Arthur (1982), the term 'objectification' shaped by Marx was then applied to Hegel, because it served for a better understanding of what Hegel had originally intended (Miller 1993).

⁸ In English, the term 'alienation' is often also translated with 'objectification' (see Miller 1993).

thinking that the key to what humanity produced, or what produced humanity, was intellectual." (Miller 2010:58) For Marx, it was nature itself which stands at the beginning of humanity – "the raw material from which we make our lives" (Miller 2010:58). While Hegel took consciousness on each stage as criterion through which we are able to recognize ourselves outside ourselves, Marx sees labor as the main key. In Hegel's thinking the subject "develops through a process of objectification in which the external is first created through an act of positing, then reincorporated in an act of sublation. For Marx also, the subject creates an external world, in the mirror of which the human species is realized; but for him this is an act of physical creation" (Miller 1998:35). In some sense, one could argue, we cannot see how we look, or even who we are, except by looking into a mirror, which is an object – a material object created by human beings. But Marx' connotation of the term 'alienation' is not a positive one. According to him, the alienation of a worker from the object he has created is the logical outcome of industrialism. Miller takes on Marx' point about alienation, in which the material form is always created through work, but refers to Hegel's notion about self-alienation. "This process involving self-alienation is what I refer to when I use the word 'objectification' (...). It is the way we enhance our capacity as human beings." (Miller 2010:59) By 'enhancing our capacity' Miller means the way in which we create something, yet, when doing so, we create a contradiction at the very same time – within the process of objectification, for which self-alienation is central. While Marx states that within industrialization the objects humans create are reduced to fetishism – commodities that appear to gain value through market exchange and not as the work of people –, Miller criticizes Marx insofar as this is not the entire Hegelian process, because the contradiction is not accepted and sublated (Miller 1998, 2010).

In his *Philosophy of Money*, Georg Simmel (2004) developed the thought that the contradictions produced by the processes of self-alienation and sublation "are intrinsic to culture. (...) If culture, for Simmel, is this Hegelian process that potentially can either grow us or oppress us, then culture is a subset of dialectical philosophy, and material culture is a subset to culture." (Miller 2010:63) For Simmel, who was interested in the sheer quantity of consumer goods and the role of money, saw money – the abstraction of exchange – as the core example where such contradictions can be seen. And the same goes with objects. "Whether the objects are books, furniture, or cars, individuals are seen by Simmel as increasingly coming into relationship with them, not as producers who fail to recognize their products, but as consumers who have to determine their own development in this world of goods." (Miller 1998:76) It is especially on this stage of sublation, where Miller grounds his theoretical approach towards objects – or 'stuff', as he may today refer to objects (Miller 2010). To overcome the contradiction, sublation (*Aufhebung*) is needed, and this is done by establishing

a relationship towards the alienated object. Simmel didn't ground the concept of objectification on the the basis of production, but on the basis of consumption – in the state of sublation. Consumption is therefore not seen as an economical process of buying something, but as the act of sublation by which products are (re-)incorporated into the self. For we are dealing with a dialectic process grounded in Hegel's positivist thinking, the self develops itself to more than it was before. Yet, since anthropology is not a positivist science and has shaken off its cultural evolutionist tradition, this 'development to more' has to be seen as a cultural process – as a development towards more social relations, rather than a historical development of the state of mind. In Miller's theory of objectification, he gives "shape to the idea that objects make us, as part of the very same process by which we make them. That ultimately there is no separation of subjects and objects." (Miller 2010:60)

Going back to Pauline Garvey's example of moving furniture, the objectification process can clearly be filtered out. When she writes about the "domestic raw material (...) feeding normative needs" (Garvey 2001:66), this has to be seen as the beginning of the process. The raw material are the objects which the consciousness alienated from itself – the objects which are not recognized as a product of consciousness. But through rearranging furniture, the social subject creates relations towards the objects. A trivial radio, for instance, as Garvey describes, provides a contradiction: Not only because of the question where to place it in the rearranged room, but because of recognizing it as something alienated. After the rearrangement is done, and the radio has not even moved its position, a social relation has been built. A relation that is grounded in solving the contradiction – within sublation – in which objects like the radio become significant within the process of objectification, as Garvey argues. A relation that is built through the appropriation of the alienated object by the self. Garvey also provides examples of where self-alienation is situated by illustrating Monica. She states that the "problem for Monica is essentially an ambivalence towards her shifting ideals, and her home has come to mirror how her expectations and needs have changed with age and improving financial circumstances." (Garvey 2001:62) In Garvey's example of Monica's postbox, Monica was given an ornamented postbox with a hand painted nameplate on it as a present from a friend. She was quite happy with it, because it was distinct to the other boxes in the neighboring area. In order to make the postbox fit her house, she started to paint the window boxes and window frames in a color matching the postbox. One day, when walking through her neighborhood, Monica realized that all the houses had a postbox similar to hers. She was irritated by understanding that things not "only have to look nice from the inside but from the outside too" (Garvey 2001:63) – not only looking nice when seeing things from inside a house, but looking nice when walking around the neighborhood. Her reaction was to paint everything white around her house – the postbox with the nameplate, the window boxes and the window

frames. Monica saw the reaction to paint everything white as a protest, even as a provocation towards the neighbors. Hence, "as she discusses the post-box episode, her home becomes a canvas through which she pictured her 'true' identity." (Garvey 2001:63)

The example of Monica provides all stages of Miller's objectification process. When Monica received her postbox as a present, she was quite happy about it – the postbox as a materialized relation to a dear friend. To incorporate this material object – this social relation – into her home, she painted her window frames matching the colors of the postbox. This can be seen as the process of sublation – where she integrates the social relation to her friend into her material world. The social relation to the postbox stands on the same level as the relations she has to other people, and is therefore not reducible to a particular entity. The process of self-alienation can be identified with Monica walking through her neighborhood and suddenly experiencing a contradiction, recognizing the similarities between the decorations of her front yard and those of her neighbors. By doing so, she divided herself from her very own creation – making the window boxes and window frames matching the color scheme of the postbox. When Monica expressed that things in the front yards of her neighbors' houses should look nice from the outside, too, and not only from the inside, her consciousness clearly entered another stage: she recognized something what before was unseen and assumed as given. To overcome the contradiction, she painted everything white, in order to establish a new relationship towards herself – or, as Garvey (2001) put it, towards her 'true' identity.

There is another detail in Garvey's example, which relates to Miller's theory of material culture. Namely, when Monica is provoking her neighbors by painting everything white. For Miller, relying on Simmel's argument that society is constituted by the interaction of individuals, Monica's radical change of her front yard would be seen as an interaction with her neighbors through material culture. By giving her house a rather unusual appearance, it seems that she invites her neighbors to a different stage of consciousness, to a stage where they alienate themselves from their front yard decorations. The example of Monica illustrates how "her decorative decisions are as much about presentation *to* herself and self-definition as about presentation *of* herself to others." (Garvey 2001:66) I would argue that the presentation of herself to others is as much a social interaction as the presentation to herself through the process of objectification is a social interaction. Although Garvey focused in her paper "on the incoherence of narrative, on the creation of unity through disjuncture and looks at the home as providing coherence from layers of fractured experience" (Garvey 2001:66), the process of objectification following Miller can be seen as a blueprint to Garvey's text. Since objectification is always the process of alienation and sublation, it is therefore also a unity through disjuncture. Garvey's examples show that objects and homes do not render stable entities. They are involved in processes – processes of social relations. In here, Miller's notion of

objectification differs from others, insofar as social relations are not only restricted to subjects, but also involve objects. Thus, social relations can also have a material character.

Considering Henriette's sideboard, I can also find this materiality of social relations. When she spoke about the sideboard's then determined function as a 'gap filler', she had not been considering any social relation towards the actual object which should take the place. Yet, she had already identified a gap – something missing in her living room, something a new object should fill out. When the sideboard had been positioned, Henriette mentioned that she had to get used to it. Again, there was no social relation towards the object: although she wanted the 'gap filler' positioned in the living room, she had to get used to it, or, in other words, she sublated her contradiction – the contradiction that a new object actually appeared in its full material size. But, over time a relationship was developing. She pointed out how the colors were going with the chairs next to the sideboard, how much she liked the materials, liked to touch the wood. Henriette found her very own relationship to this sideboard. That she had already overcome the sublation, can be deduced from her statement 'it's incorporating itself nicely into the room'. I assume that Henriette had similar problems to solve, similar contradictions to overcome with various other pieces of furniture in the room – she indicates her social relations to the other pieces of furniture, when she speaks about 'the room'. Her social relations to the worn lounge chair I occupied this evening, to the table with the four different chairs standing around it. Adopting the view that "this world confronts us as material culture and continues to evolve through us" (Miller 2005:8), that there is no distinction between subjects and objects, even the room itself, since it is Henriette's living room, is actually a creation of Henriette's self. Therefore, when she speaks about how the sideboard fits nicely into the room, she actually says that the sideboard incorporates itself nicely into the set of her social relations to the other objects and subjects – that the sideboard fits nicely into Henriette's self-consciousness. In this sense, the alienated 'gap filler' was (re-)incorporated into Henriette's life by building up a social relationship through the act of consuming it. Consuming in the way that the alienated object became part of Henriette – the subject. And it is a rather tight connection Henriette built, when she says, "It is a piece of furniture with which I want to spend many years." I would even go so far and argue that through redecorating the sideboard, by placing some of the vases of her collection on it – objects which, in Hegel's sense, might stand on another stage of objectification – Henriette builds up this relation. Summing up, according to Miller's notion of objectification, it is a social relation to the object which Henriette has built up, similar to relations Henriette has with subjects.

2.3.2. OBJECTIFICATION THROUGH CONSUMPTION

Although the described dialectical process offers a good explanation for the given examples, there is one aspect in Miller's theory I have disregarded, although it is fundamental for his concept. Miller developed his approach of objectification within the focus of (mass-) consumption in modern societies. According to him, shopping or consuming is a form of fulfilling normative aspects (Miller 2012) – in the way how someone sees himself or herself within specific social parameters.⁹ Miller provides us with a theory about shopping referred to as 'peanut butter theory' (Miller 2001b), which is based "on the discrepancy between a projected ideal and an actual person" (Miller 2012:73). The name derives from an example in which peanut butter is bought as a compromise of what is healthy for a child and what the child is actually willing to eat. He also gives the example of Clara (Miller 2001b, Miller 2012) who quitted her job to study for a Master's degree, and felt the need to "dress down like a student" (Miller 2012:74). Clara expressed her need for sensible shoes and went shopping, but didn't find any shoes which "accords with this formulation confirms her sense of herself as actually quite frivolous and therefore not really like a student is supposed, in her mind, to be" (Miller 2012:74). Eventually, she buys 'sensible' shoes, but several days later she finds out that they are not comfortable, and "returns to the high-heeled dressy shoes that are paradoxically more comfortable – at least in the sense that she has returned to what she takes to be her real self" (Miller 2012:74). This example illustrates that consumption is about a tension between the normative – what kind of shoes a MA student is supposed to wear – and the actual Clara. The aim of consuming is to diminish this tension through consumption. Miller touches hereon the big question of normativity.

Alison Clarke has shown how these two components of the actual and the ideal also play a role in dwelling. Clarke is interested in how "the increasing emphasis on home decoration as a practice, its intersection with class, gender and ethnicity, is related to the construction of ideal and actual contemporary social worlds." (Clarke 2001:25) By analyzing working class homes in a British council estate, she demonstrates that home decorations are influenced by the concern what other people might think about them, the neighbors, for instance. But the neighbors never show up – the ideal is an absent other. Similar to Clara's ideal of sensible shoes suitable for a MA student, Clarke shows "how the ideal home, becomes an internalized vision of what other people might think of one." (Clarke 2001:42) Home decorating in her study is seen as a tool to establish "an ideal and outside world." (Clarke 2001:32) Further, Clarke shows that these households try to live up to their ideal self. The objectification in form of decorations

⁹ Miller is heavily relying here on the concept of 'habitus' formed by Pierre Bourdieu. An aspect I won't go into detail here, even though it is important for Miller. The reason why I do so lies in the danger dealing with Bourdieu's habitus and (class) distinctions: for the simple reason that one will find them, if one is searching for them. Or in other words, one gets what one is searching for.

and furniture is directed towards the construction of ideal selves, to whom tenants feel to "live up to, give time to, show off to" (Clarke 2001:42). Hence, Clarke states that "consumption, in the form of home decorating is seen as a focal point, rather than a 'reflection', of the construction and negotiation of 'household philosophies'." (Clarke 2001:32)

These examples show – Clara dressing down, or home decorating as construction of an ideal self – that they deal with the wider context of society and culture. This wider context could be found in Miller's use of the 'habitus' concept formed by Pierre Bourdieu (1987). To make a long story short, the concept of habitus provides a basis to explain a society in relation to structures. Bourdieu is interested in the 'the mode of generation practices', yet not as Michel Foucault who asks what they produce, but rather regarding the question of what produces them. Habits, in this sense, are embodied practices of everyday life, which "stored up the power of social reproduction." (Miller 2005:6) Bourdieu emphasized order and the location of objects in a household. "Each order was argued to be homologous with other orders such as gender, or social hierarchy, and thus the less tangible was grounded in the more tangible. These became habitual ways of being in the world and in their underlying order emerged as second nature or habitus." (Miller 2005:6) Miller takes on this concept of habitus when he speaks about social norms, as in the example of Clara who was shopping for 'suitable MA student shoes'. Within households he sees the concept "less as a backdrop or reservoir of an almost unconscious habitus constructed out of order and relations. Instead [they] became a mode of expression, a means by which people constructed themselves and their ideologies." (Miller 2001b:10) Therefore, consumption can be pictured as "myriad strategies of recontextualization (...) which have been used to overcome the alienatory consequences of mass consumer culture." (Miller 1998:229)

Judith Attfield (1999) has shown how consumption in form of appropriation is very powerful against normativity. In her example, she focuses on furniture in the context of public housing. Attfield shows that coffee tables were, because of their relatively low cost, "the most popular pieces of furniture brought in to add a touch of modernity to a household that could not afford to buy new furniture." (Attfield 1999:80) Further, she describes how people used modern furniture in contrast to the designers' intentions. The designers often pictured it as 'failed modernity' when the "placing of a chair diagonally across the corner of a room was seen as completely at odds" (Attfield 1999:80). But this critique, Attfield argues, "does not account for the way in which the interiors were actually used to create a popular type of modernity" (Attfield 1999:82). Hence, the normativity addressed by Miller is challenged within the process of consumption and active appropriation. And because consumption is part of a dialectical objectification, Miller's argument is one of "novelty rather than tradition" (Tilley 2006:68). An assumption Miller extracts from Hegel: 'novelty' in the sense of the positive way

in which consciousness changes. With the arrival of the Hegelian consciousness at the next stage it realizes something new, whereas 'tradition' is concerned with reproduction. Thus, for Miller the appropriation of an alienated object is concerned with realizing the object in new ways. And because this process is dialectical, it also addresses the way in which the subject changes – the becoming of self (Miller 1998). Along these lines, a material culture perspective through consumption is not so much concerned with what chairs or shoes mean. Neither is it concerned with what kind of agency objects have, nor with what kind of biography they have gained. Rather, it is concerned with how people actively appropriate consumer goods to construct themselves.

2.3.3. GUSTAV'S CAVE

I had been staying with Gustav now for three days, but somehow many pages of my notebook were still blank. What had we been doing the whole time? Gustav shared his flat with a friend, and in this flat each of them had a rather big room for themselves. Together, they shared a kitchen, a bathroom and some kind of spare room. In this room, my bed was located. Most of the time we were sitting in the kitchen – drinking coffee in the mornings, drinking beer in the evenings. The kitchen itself was tiny, the table in it ridiculously small, and there were only one chair and one stool to sit on. At one evening, I had to move my improvised bed out of the narrow spare room to give way to a table, which almost occupied the entire room anyway, to have a small dinner party. Another evening we were sitting in this room watching a film on a TV set, which was balancing on a weird construction in the corner of the room.

Looking at the blank pages in my notebook, it was now that I realized I had never really entered Gustav's room in the last three days I was staying with him. The only thing I was able to write into my book was the note that his room, as well as the room of his friend, looked quite different from the rest of the flat. The kitchen was worn and old, and was obviously part of the facilities the land lord had provided. The same could be said about the bathroom in a rather disturbing 1980s style. Also, the narrow room was hardly furnished. The table hadn't been picked with care, and at the dinner party all the people on one side of the table had to stand up, if someone wanted to go to the bathroom, because the room was so small. Also, the chairs were a mere collection of what could be gathered from friends and family rather than being chosen or even carefully selected. When I asked about the kitchen we spent so much time in, or the furnishing of the narrow room we had the dinner party in, the answer Gustav gave me was:

"Forget about these! They are just fulfilling their propose, they were all here when we moved in, and neither my flatmate nor me want to invest any money and time into them." (pers. ref.)

Gustav spent quite some time on his own in his room, since I told him not to bother about me being in his flat. He closed the door to read a book, to talk with friends on the phone, or to surf on the internet, as I was told. Somehow, his room was never really open to me and was never a topic of conversation. So, on this third day I finally summoned the courage and asked him why so? What was he doing in his room and what was the room for?

"Well, you know, this is my room, my private cave, if you want. My flatmate has a room, and I have one, and we respect each others privacy. (...) In here is my stuff, my books, my desk, and so on. I can go in there and be on my own." (pers. ref.)

Eventually, I was invited into his room. The room itself wasn't furnished quite differently from the rest of the flat. An old desk was standing beneath a bunk bed, which was mounted on a huge wall filling cabinet, which was, as I learned later, part of the furniture belonging to the landlord. There were two armchairs standing in the middle of the room, with an improvised table between them. A bookshelf was mounted on the wall, and on the opposite wall a piece of Indian style cloth was hanging. Somehow, the room appeared quite empty. Yet, we began to chat about the things in his possession:

"Tell me about your stuff," I tried to open the conversation. "A nice high-bed you have."

"Yes, the high-bed here I constructed the very first day we moved in," Gustav replied.

"So you built it by yourself?"

"A friend of mine, who is into woodwork, helped me to buy the wood and mounted it all up. It was quite some action (...)." Gustav would have possibly explained in detail the whole day they were working on the bed, yet I was able to manage to shift the conversation towards furniture again. "Tell me about the armchairs here, I consider them as quite nice pieces."

"Well, the armchairs here, I bought them with my brother at a flea market, back home before I moved to Vienna."

"If you consider to give them away, please let me know. I rather like them and would be delighted to take them over as soon as you want to get rid of them!"

"I think I won't, because they remind me of the situation with my brother. You know it is the same with the piece of cloth I have hanging there, I bought it when I was in India with a friend the first time (...) You know, I am not so much into material objects. (...)"

Indeed, as said before, there were not many pieces around. Yet, while I asked him about some specific items, Gustav started to point out even smaller pieces he had in his room. Like a photograph pinned to board. "The picture here is showing me with old friends I haven't seen in ages – I should really give them a call sometime (...)" (pers. ref); or a book he emphasized, which his ex-girlfriend brought him from a trip to London. Gustav went on and on. His 'cave' was changing from a private room of his own to a room full of people, a room full of family and friends. The meaning of the objects didn't lie so much in what they were – actually, their meaning wasn't of any importance to Gustav. What mattered was how they were connected to people. Gustav appropriated all the objects in connection to people – an objectification of social relations at work. There were his brother, his ex-girlfriend, friends who were close, and friends he hadn't seen in years. Connections to people he shared strong memories with. The objects didn't enter Gustav's life, because he was interested in their looks or in their connection to a creator or to the designer who conceived them – his active appropriation of these things was governed by the situations in which he obtained them. Gustav appropriated them, and they became part of himself through the process of objectification. The objects are just as much part of him like the social relationships he enters and makes part of himself. In this sense, Gustav's 'cave' is a kind of self-expression – like in Garvey's (2001) example of moving furniture, in which particular objects mattered to serve as the householders' self-expression. In Attfield's (1999) example it was the coffee table, which served as such – as an active appropriation which had nothing to do with what the objects were made for, but with how they were used to express their owners' own ideas about modernity. Similarly, Gustav's active appropriation is what he thinks is making him up.

Within an objectification process understood through consumption, objects are part of the self, just as any other social aspects of the person. Therefore, objects are needed to become oneself through the process of objectification. Sarah Pink studied these practices in the context of 'sensory homes' (Pink 2004). She demonstrated how people construct their notion of 'home' through smell, sound and texture – how homes should or shouldn't smell, sound and feel. Thus, the householders Pink worked with engaged themselves in consumption practices to make their homes smell, sound and feel 'homey'. "Informants were creative appropriators and mixers of diverse smells in their practices of home" (Pink 2004:67), while others, for example, used music to fulfill the task to create a personalized sound carpet which captured their own ideas about home. These strategies of creative appropriation or creative consumption are the strategies through which we create ourselves. Pink describes "home as a creative domain, a space where each individual (...) could articulate her or his unique gendered self in negotiation with the sensory, social, cultural and material environment in which she or he lived." (Pink 2004:1) Strategies of creative appropriation can be seen in home creativity as

well as in housework – "both are performative activities and creative processes that affect visual and other sensory results and individuals" (Pink 2004:41). In this sense, also the furniture outside Gustav's room can be pictured as the process of creative appropriation. Although Gustav and his flatmate do not (re-)decorate the kitchen or the narrow room, their activities – or rather saying non-activities – can also be described as creative appropriation. Although the pieces of furniture belong neither to Gustav nor to his flatmate, they are those things which objectify the relationship between him and his flatmate – the materiality of a social relation. At some point in the future one of the two men will move out. They don't invest any time and money into decorating or changing furniture outside their rooms, because their relationship in this constellation has an expiry date. The fragile constellation is to some extent their sense of home, and therefore the furniture outside their rooms is creatively appropriated to support this touch. This is the process of objectification, by which people actively "appropriate consumer goods, objectify and fashion their identities through for example (...) home furnishing (...). Once bought, home consumer products can be endlessly personalized and become as much part of the modern self as craft products in small-scale societies." (Tilley 2006b:68) How Gustav and his flatmate are dealing with the furniture outside their rooms is a process in which objects are making subjects. Objects which constitute the relationship between Gustav and his flatmate. Miller's understanding of the material world lies in the nature of the dialectical relationship to the object. A process in which people actively appropriate things like furniture.

2.4. TOWARDS A CRITIQUE OF MATERIAL CULTURE

Within the approach to objectification provided by Daniel Miller and exemplified by some authors around him, every relationship between humans as well as between humans and material things is dialectical per se – "A dialectical republic in which persons and things exist in mutual self construction and respect for their mutual dependency" (Miller 2005:38). Entering the field of Hegelian contradictions, people constantly produce some kind of objectification – a process which is full of contradiction, and being itself inherent to culture. Miller's dialectical approach always includes a certain kind of history. When referring to Hegel, history is inevitable, since Hegel is relying on some sort of evolution of the consciousness. Thus, Miller's concept is one which derives from the past and emphasizes the notion of becoming as a process of objectification. Therefore, dealing with things has always to do with consciousness and knowledge – acted out like manifestations of consciousness, as a sort of self-expression. The consciousness emerges from the interrogation with the material world.

But, does this smoothly running wheel – or, too smoothly running wheel, as Christopher Pinney (2005) criticizes – of objectification give full character to the ethnographic knowledge?

"Why is it that when we see someone buying refrigerator magnets and someone else putting on eyeliner or cooking dinner or singing at a karaoke bar or just sitting around watching television, we assume that they are on some level doing the same thing, that it can be described as 'consumption' or 'consumer behavior', and that these are all in some way analogous to eating food?" (Graebner 2011:498), David Grabner critically asks out of a Marxist tradition. According to him, the notion of consumption appears to be a theoretical choice assuming "that the main thing people do when they are not working is 'consuming' things" (Graebner 2011:501). When Miller argues "that objects make us, as part of the very same process by which we make them" (Miller 2010:60), his approach is dialectical insofar as alienated objects need to be sublated by consuming them. We 'make' objects by building social relations to them, we construct objects as well as ourselves. Yet, this is pictured as a form of consumption, but not as a form of production. For Grabner, "social life is and always has been mainly about the mutual creation of human beings, the ideology of consumption has been endlessly effective in helping us forget this." (Grabner 2011:502)

When I was sitting in Henriette's living room talking about her combination of old and new furniture, she explained me how she chooses the items. "To pick out some pieces you like and populate your surroundings. Pieces which are formally and currently appealing, which constitute and personalize a common retrospect in good old times. (...) We like to have very special pieces to be able to tell stories." (pers. ref) Indeed, material culture studies in general focus on the relationship between things, human culture and society by picturing "things as an integral part of being human and living together with others." (Tilley 2006b:4) Yet, by following Grabner's critique, Henriette's statement (of picking special pieces one can tell stories about to others) is a mutual creation of herself and therefore a form of production, rather than a dialectical process of consumption specified as objectification. Since material objects also 'populate' Henriette's surroundings, as she refers to, they must have the capacity to act. Although Miller tries to diminish the 'modern' opposition between objects and subjects, when he argues for a dialectical relationship to the object he still relies on the concept of consciousness – a humanistic concept, as Martin Holbraad points out (Holbraad 2011). A more democratic understanding provides Bruno Latour who refuses dialectical thinking, and offers a more transcendental theory according to which the capacity to act – let's say the action of dwelling – is distributed throughout a network of actants.

When Leach suggested to understand that objects have their own agency (Leach 2007), he had something different in mind than a striking door stopper as an object which is also a subject.

Along with Amiria Henare, Martin Holbraad and Sari Wastell, he stresses a methodological approach "where the 'things' themselves dictate a plurality of ontologies" (Henare et al. 2007:7), instead of promoting Latour's "new meta-theory whereby the inclusion of non-human/human hybrids portrays everything as a network of entities that breach the object/subject divide" (Henare et al. 2007:7). Yet, in ethnographic settings things are often encountered differently – as things rather than as hybrid object-subjects. Holbraad, for example, gives the example of *aché*, a particular kind of powder which is used during seances by Cuban diviners, constituting the diviners' power (Holbraad 2007). "If one were to take this powder as a thing in the analytic sense, the ethnographer would have to devise a connection between two distinct entities (powder and power)" (Henare et al. 2007:5). But picturing things in their own regard, they impose multiple attitudes – a "connection with power is already immanent in the powder (the thing is both powder and power and is accepted as such)." (Henare et al. 2007:6) Just as Leach (2007) argues that objects have agency, this powder is power – or, in my empirical example of Henriette, the *Tram Chair* is technoid. Hence, Henare, Holbraad and Wastell argue that "things (...) are concepts as much as they appear to us as 'material' or 'physical' entities." (Henare et al. 2007:16) The Cuban diviners' powder doesn't require much explanation or ethnographic interpretation, because the powder is power – it doesn't represent power, neither do the diviners attribute power to the powder, for they argue that "things disclose themselves not as perceptions but as conceptions." (Henare et al. 2007:17) Thus, the same thing, the *Tram Chair*, for instance, can be seen differently by Henriette and me, which has to do with a different conception – not within different world views, but within different worlds (Henare et al. 2007). Henare, Holbraad and Wastell's argument is to encounter things as they appear ethnographically, paired with a radical constructivism. Taking on such an approach implies that people are constructing their life worlds rather than having world views, because the latter notion implies that there is *a* 'real' world lying out there.

Such a perspective was stressed by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who argued – as many other anthropologists did – that "the classic distinction between nature and culture cannot be used to describe domains internal to non-Western cosmologies without first undergoing a rigorous ethnographic critique." (de Castro 2012:45) By looking at Amerindian societies, he finds ethnographic evidence that their cosmologies "do not feature a general, collective concept of 'animal' as opposed to 'human'." (de Castro 2012:79) Rather, "indigenous theory according to which the way humans perceive animals and other subjectivities that inhabit the world – gods, spirits, the dead, inhabitants of other cosmic levels, meteorological phenomena, plants, occasionally even objects and artifacts – differs profoundly from the way in which these beings see humans and see themselves." (de Castro 1998:470) Normally, people in these societies see

humans as humans, animals as animals, and spirits as spirits. Yet, from an Amerindian point of view, animals and spirits see human as animals or spirits, and themselves as humans. They "experience their own habits and characteristics in the form of culture – they see their food as human food (jaguars see blood as manioc beer)." (de Castro 1998:470) De Castro therefore coined the term *perspectivism* to describe these particular configurations between humans and non-humans. (de Castro 1998, 2012). In Amerindian cosmology and myth, non-humans see things as human beings, but differently: blood is beer for the jaguar – "what to us is soaking manioc, the souls of the dead see as rotting corpse" (de Castro 2012:107). Yet, the point de Castro is making is not that how jaguars and people see the world differs, but rather that "all beings see (...) the world in the same way – what changes is the world that they see" (de Castro 2012:107). In the world of the jaguar manioc beer is actually blood, while manioc beer in the world of humans is brewed out of a specific plant, yet both see it as beer. Jaguars and humans therefore see the world in the same way where beer is just beer. What changes is the perspective, in which human beings see jaguars as animals who are drinking blood – which is beer to the jaguar. So, Henare, Holbraad and Wastell's argument is, in short, to think through things – an artifact-oriented anthropology, which encounters things as part of the world they study within ethnography – rather than pressing them into preexisting analytical categories.

The 'Thinking Through Things' (TTT) approach is actually very appealing to understand the role of objects within dwelling. Different to Miller's approach, objects do not run through different stages of consciousness, but appear as what they are ethnographically. Let me give an example. Every Monday I go to my yoga class. The small studio is located on the backside of a community office. You have to ring a bell, and someone will come to open the door. Then, you take off your shoes and hang your coat on a coat rack. Well, on some kind of coat rack. Actually – and precisely in here lies the problem – the coat rack consists of two folding chairs mounted to the wall, so that you can hang your coat on the cross strut between the front legs and use the seat as a rear shelf. The question which Henare, Holbraad and Wastell would critically stress here is, if these chairs are chairs or if they are a coat rack? Actually, they are chairs, in the same way as the Cuban power powder is actually baby powder, but the powder has power, in the same way as the chairs are a coat rack. I don't want to go into the divinity of objects, so I leave the power powder aside now and concentrate on the chair-coat-rack-thing. Daniel Miller would argue that these chairs are objectified as something else, as a coat rack, because through creative consumption – or, in other words, using them – me and all the other attendees of my yoga class hang our coats there instead of using them as a high seat, for instance. Hanging the chairs on the wall could be seen as a kind of appropriation of the alienated chairs.

The 'Thinking Through Things' approach differs in its argument. According to Henare, we don't have to think about this coat rack as chairs, but have to think through the thing as it is, as a coat rack, as an ethnographic variable for itself (Henare 2011). Therefore, "instead of treating all the things that your informants say of and do to or with things as modes of representing the things in question, treat them as modes of defining them." (Henare 2011:12) Clearly, this approach is also concerned with the meaning of things, yet at the same time it's far away from semiotics – since TTT's argument is that the object "is signifier and signified" (Holbraad 2007:197) at the same time. Or, in other words: a thing is equally a concept and, thus, a concept is equally a thing. Indeed, anthropologists should – or even must – account objects in their own regard or in the regard to their interlocutors. Since it was not the powder that spoke to Holbraad (2007), but his informants. In other words: Who am I to say that Cuban diviners 'think' that powder has power? Who am I to say that their powder 'is actually' baby powder? A chemist? Well, a chemist might come to the conclusion that the baby powder and the powerful powder have the same chemical composition, but she wouldn't assume they were powerful or not. So, who am I to state that a door stopper cannot strike? Who am I to say that a sideboard in Henriette's flat is something else than a gap filler? Who am I to state that a chair means something else than technoidity? Who am I to state that a room is filled with people rather than with furniture?

The ontological shift – not to say revolution – the above-named authors offer, is fruitful in so far as they stress the point not to explain the (historic) relationships between objects and subjects – or, more precisely, between objects/subjects and subjects/objects –, but to deal with the material thing as it appears in the (ethnographic) world. While for Miller all social relations produce some kind of contradiction – when Cuban diviners deal with baby powder, it has to be appropriated as powerful powder – Henare, Holbraad and Wastell seek to understand the powerful powder as it is, without stressing the quality of relation in advance. Whereas Latour argues for more ontology within anthropology (Latour 2013), Henare et al. "propose a methodology where the 'things' themselves dictate a plurality of ontologies" (Henare 2007:7). Whether things are gap fillers as Henriette's sideboard, or good memories like in Gustav's cave – these things are what they are, no further explanation needed. Being an anthropologist, my aim is to understand people in their surroundings, and therefore I have to take objects into account as they appear to people. The critique of the 'Thinking Through Things' approach of material culture is that "material culture studies may displace an anthropology obsessed with the imperium of the social, but only to replace it with a better anthropology humble enough to recognize the ways in which things also so pervasively contribute to our humanity." (Holbraad 2011:5). Indeed, a 'Thinking Through Things' approach provides a different methodological understanding towards what things mean, what things do, and what things are. Although TTT

remains within social anthropology as a human centered approach, it offers an understanding to anthropology that "analyses may involve an irreducibly thing-driven component or phase" (Holbraad 2011:22).

2.5. SUMMING UP

This chapter on material culture offers three different ways how to approach things: by asking what things *are*, what they *mean*, and what they *do* within households. The use of objects like pieces of furniture as purpose of (self-)representation – things standing for something, carrying meaning – was challenged by going deeper into semiotic analysis. According to semiotic thinking, an object signifies a concept, and what matters is the concept behind the object. Within a post-semiotic thinking, it was Roland Barthes who showed that individuals can modify these concepts. His ideas were not exclusively directed to single artifacts, rather, he pictured modern consumer goods, like cars and fashion as well as furniture, as a collection of objects. Stuart Hall followed Barthes' discursive thinking, but took on a more constructionist approach. Meaning, in Hall's sense, is not governed by a distinct class, but seen as a practice of various social actors, some being more powerful than others. Therefore, a struggle over meaning always governs representation. The case of the Tram Chair exemplified that objects, like furniture, can have various meanings. Meaning is not something which is inherent to the object nor is it fixed, rather, there is always a struggle over it. Neither a single piece of furniture nor a collection of furniture can indicate a single concept. Thinking further about concepts, I focused on Webb Keane's ideas of a semiotic ideology. By using Charles Sanders Peirce's concept of semiology, Keane seeks to mediate the relation between ideas and things. Ideas, or concepts, need something to be embodied in. Thus, the concept can't stand for itself, nor can the object stand for itself – both are interlinked. This insight has a fundamental implication for my research question: rather than asking people what things in their surroundings mean, I have to focus more on things themselves. In a similar manner as TTT stresses the point that the concept is the object and the object is the concept. This implies that when looking at objects or asking about the concept behind them, it is fruitless to be concerned with meaning. Because objects are the concepts in our surroundings, and never represent – stand for – concepts.

I also raised the question what things do, and had a look at Alfred Gell's idea that objects carry agency. I gained an understanding of in how far objects are able to act, and how agency can be abducted from objects. Yet, at the same time, I showed the limits of Gell's theory by looking deeper into patient and agent situations. Although Gell's theory is often accused to be anthropomorphic, it was James Leach (2007) who stressed the non-representational character

of it and argued that things in homes, for instance, have agency themselves – no creator needed. Concerned with agency, Bruno Latour argues against a modern empiricist duality of objects and subjects. Neither is it the subject which is able to act, nor is it the object, but both of them are part of a network in which agency is distributed. Dwelling in Latour's sense is not inherent purely to the subject, neither it is a supplemented object as in Gell's theory – which is then able to dwell. Instead, Latour would argue that dwelling is only possible in specific circumstances within a network, because agency is distributed throughout it. By taking on this philosophical standpoint, one can carefully disentangle the set of actants active in the situation of dwelling; disentangle the role of objects and subjects both belonging to the same entity and describing how the network is constituted.

Daniel Miller had something else in mind, when he addressed things by the concept of objectification. Although his argument is quite similar to Gell's, who saw agency inherent to objects as soon as they "become enmeshed in a texture of social relationships" (Gell 1998:16), Miller wants to overcome the dualism between object and subject completely. In his extractions from Hegel, Marx and Simmel, he shows that through consumption we establish social relationships to objects, which stand in a dialectical position to the subject. Objects, like furniture, enter the field of social relations and thus become part of oneself. The householder is creating herself through objects. The example of Gustav's cave made a clear point how the objects inside and outside of his cave are used for creating himself through social relations. Many writers dealing with the domestic followed Miller's dialectical path in anthropology. Despite of the critique that he pictures everything as a social relation, a circumstance which is motivated by the departing point of the Hegelian consciousness, Miller's theory marks a turning point within material culture.

For Henare, Holbraad and Wastell, Miller's position is too humanistic. They argue that things should be grasped empirically. Their heuristic approach towards objects centers on the opinion that things should be taken as seriously as they are presented in the ethnographic setting. Therefore, several qualities of things lie in things themselves and not within a social relation to the thing. Taking this approach seriously, I shall take on Henare, Holbraad and Wastell's argument of 'thinking through things' and understand dwelling as a thing-driven action rather than a dialectical relationship. Although these authors picture Latour's ANT as a too radical meta-leveled philosophical theory (Henare et al. 2007), I would not see them too far apart from each other. To use Miller's analogy of the philosophical wheel (Miller 2005), I would rather say they place some additional spokes into the wheel. According to my understanding of ANT, it is not so much about how to address objects methodologically, but rather to be conscious about the situations – the network – in which ethnography takes place. Within ANT, the ethnographer has to be pictured as an actant like every other human or non-human actant

in this setting. This is what makes ANT so attractive in the end for anthropologists: it does not seek to understand the world through a 'modern' objective lens, but through the very situation in which an action appears, of which the ethnographer is always part of, as well as other actants.

So, what does it mean that "dwelling itself is always a staying with things" (Heidegger 1993:353)? Miller's concept of objectification is a strong argument – that we need things to become ourselves. However, by following an approach TTT offered, one has to shift towards phenomenology – "concerned with human encounter, experience and understanding of worldly things" (Thomas 2006:43). Although Miller stated that one would come to the same conclusion by either using phenomenology or dialectics (Miller 2005, 2010), my aim is not to proof his point. However, a sensible combination of these two approaches would be a possible conclusion at this point. Daniel Miller argued elsewhere "that we cannot assume or presume the genres which constitute the relationships to which lives are devoted and through which people feel fulfilled. (...) I see no reason to highlight homes and bodies as against pets, lovers, kitchens, friends or religions." (Miller 2008:290) In his book *The Comfort of Things* (2008), Miller describes thirty-two portraits of people living in a street in London. Instead of taking this street as an analytical category as in classic anthropology – studying a specific ethnic group, a tribe in a specific geographic area –, Miller states that "this street (...) and every household in this book is a tribe." (Miller 2008:295) Combining this view with TTT's claim for more ontology, leads to the assumption that things tell different stories, constitute different relations and have different qualities and meanings in every household I conducted research with. Describing what a chair and a sideboard is in Henriette's world, or what a high-bed and a kitchen is in Gustav's, would lead to the conclusion that multiple worlds are existing in the households of my interlocutors in Vienna, as much as they exist in Steward Street Miller described. The roles things play in dwelling – what they are, do and mean – are multiple and plural.

3. DESIGN ANTHROPOLOGY

While in the previous chapter I was focusing on things, in this chapter I shall emphasize Martin Heidegger's (1993) suggestion to picture dwelling as a *staying with* things. For Heidegger, dwelling is tightly knit to building in stating that "building is really dwelling" (Heidegger 1993:350). However, Heidegger regards building not only as the activity of laying bricks with mortar, in the sense of architecture and engineering constructions. Rather, he grounds building in the Greek word 'tikto', meaning "to bring forth or to produce" (Heidegger 1993:361). So, according to Heidegger, dwelling as a staying with things is also producing and bringing forth. Therefore, I shall consider the activity of dwelling in the light of Design Anthropology. This relatively new field of interest seeks to understand producing not solely in terms of construction and manual labor, but also as process of thought (Otto et al. 2013) aiming at interventions in social realities by new products and services.

Although dealing with designs – in terms of decorations – is nothing new to anthropology, within the last years the differentiated field of Design Anthropology arouse. With *Approaching the Field* I shall explore where Design Anthropology takes its leverage. Studies concerned with new technologies in digital industries such as computing, for instance, shifted from asking how new technologies can be fitted into complex social structures towards reflections about what kinds of products meet the users' practices and concerns (Drazin 2012). Such studies approach design by being concerned with how certain thoughts can be realized in material objects. DIY attempts, which came increasingly popular in the last decade (Fineder et al. 2016), could be pictured as an approach where thoughts become materialized in objects. Yet, can everybody be seen as a designer, then? According to Daniel Miller (2011), householders can be treated analogously to designers as well as to museums curators. Elaborating on these notions, I shall dedicate a chapter to the question: *Who designs?* Especially co-designing processes have challenged the picture that designers first design and then users use. Therefore, I shall reflect on the notion of design in terms of a cultural practice.

Following Johan Redström's argument, the problem with co-designing has to do less with the question who is responsible for a design and to what extent, but rather with how we perceive the outcome of such a process (Redström 2012) – the object itself. Therefore, I raise the question concerning form. In *The Matter of Form*, I shall reflect on dwelling not as a passive *staying with*, but as an active engagement with materials, which produces form. Such an attempt echoes Heidegger in the sense that building – as a form of making – and dwelling belong together.

Yet, in what ways can making be distinguished from designing then? Elaborating on this question, I shall take the practice of professional designers into consideration. In the chapter *On Designing*, I also seek to explore in what ways Design Anthropology can inform the topic of dwelling as an action which is performed alongside other activities while staying with things. Since I rely on the perspective that "building belongs to dwelling" (Heidegger 1993:362), I shall critically reflect, if the same goes with designing.

3.1. APPROACHING THE FIELD

In a popular discourse 'design' has become a prefix to all kinds of products and services. Thus, it functions as "a pervasive aspect of modern society with a large number of practitioners and a great range of subfields, such as industrial design, architecture, system design, human-computer interaction design, service design, and strategic design and innovation." (Otto et al. 2013:1) Beyond this understanding, the word design also carries the overtones of exclusiveness and high-class of material objects, when speaking about design-classics in furniture design, for instance. One of the most famous protagonists of this category is Ray and Charles Eames' 'Lounge Chair' of 1957, being still an expensive piece of furniture today. Although "composed out of different components and various materials, the »Lounge Chair« resembles a modernist sculpture" (Mang 1989:141), a formal analysis suggests. Yet, it was not so much the sculptural lines, that is the chair's form, which interested the designers, but it was the chair's expediency. In the case of the Lounge Chair this means: serving for watching television. (Mang 1989) Hence, dealing with design is dissimilar to dealing with sculptures¹⁰ – design implies what is called expediency, which implies the use by people. It also implies a certain kind of newness. The Lounge Chair, for instance, combines leather, aluminum and three dimensional moulded plywood parts, a technique developed by Charles Eames while working for the U.S. Army during World War II.

In anthropology, the debate about design used to focus mainly on style, decoration and the function of material objects in small-scale societies, linking the fields of anthropology of art and anthropology of technology. Pottery can serve as an example, where the makers of artifacts are the focal points of techniques and cultural production. Art and material objects were pictured as messengers of cultural ideas, connected with structuralist and semiotic approaches (Conkey 2006). Within postcolonial sensibilities the understanding arose that these objects "could not be considered in ahistorical, static or normative terms" (Conkey 2006:363). While new approaches in the anthropology of art are dealing with the global encounter and

¹⁰ Eventually, it was the 'Memphis' group around Ettore Sottsass in the late 1970s that helped furniture design to a touch of Avantgarde (Mang 1989).

local constitutions of art and its practices rather than with style and form (Fillitz 2013, 2015), design is approached from a different direction. Eventually, it was Judith Attfield who, in the year 2000, opened up "the study of design to dimensions not often considered over the years of anthropological and archeological studies of design." (Conkey 2006:365) By avoiding any duality between design and art, Attfield did not picture design as a category but as an aspect of the material world. She was not looking at "things in themselves, but (...) how people make sense of the world through physical objects" (Attfield 2000:1). In her book *Wild Things*, she argues that objects are always cultural and therefore cannot be pressed into any category of good or bad design. Hence, Attfield's contribution shifted the focus away from the study of canonical design artifacts towards 'things with attitude' (Attfield 2000), describing the potential of material objects which are "created with a specific end in view – whether to fulfill a particular task, make a statement, objectify moral values (...)" (Attfield 2000:12). Important for her is the potential of material objects within the context of the everyday, where she pictures design as "the integration of artifacts into the social world beyond the empirical study centered on physical features, through the acquisition of social meaning within specific cultural/historical contexts." (Attfield 2000:35) Attfield's key concept to understand design derives out of Daniel Miller's objectification and active appropriation (Miller 1998), and merges in the understanding that objects are always in circulation by the activities of people and can even produce new activities (Tilley 2006b).

When Adam Drazin and Pauline Garvey asked in "what ways design and the designed object may be fit and distinct subjects for study" (Drazin et al. 2009:8) in anthropology, they argued to start with examining approaches to technology. Until then, studies especially dealing with 'new' technologies had focused mainly on the consumption and use of new technological systems. Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch, for instance, concentrated on "the complex interrelationships of cultures and technologies as they emerge in the practices of institutions and individuals, and through the unequal but never totally determining or determined relations of public and private spheres." (Silverstone et al. 1992:23) Christina Garsten and Helena Wulff were looking at new media communication systems and their impact on social relations, dealing with the virtuality of social relations and what consequences new communication systems have (Garsten et al. 2003). While these studies were concerned with how new technologies are embedded in everyday social life, there had also already been an anthropological involvement in the conception of new and innovative technologies. The "most widely known examples are the involvement of anthropologists in conceptualizing the PC, e-mail and the Windows-style operating system" (Drazin 2009:4). Notably, too, the work of Lucy

Suchman and her involvement with Xerox' 'PARC'¹¹, which explored, based on the problem Xerox had with the instructions of a copier machine, "the relation of knowledge and action to the particular circumstances in which knowing and acting invariably occur." (Suchman 2007:176–177) This led to a more human centered approach, especially in the field of human computer interaction. In this field, the "researchers that researching computing involved researching entire ecosystems around computers" (Drazin 2012:247), questioning how new technologies are embedded in complex social structures of daily activities. Whereas in "much of the technological design, there is a notion that the user is 'built in' to the design, such that the artifact will anticipate through the notion of 'scripts', the ways it will be employed" (Drazin 2009:6), a different understanding arose over time. An understanding that considered it inadequate to "evaluate a design by outlining the needs of a user and then and then seeing how a device of system meets them (...) without considering how people characterize and know" (Drazin 2012:249) their interactions with technologies.

When dealing with design itself and those people whose profession is, for instance, to design computer interfaces, it could be argued that "anthropology comes to design from two ends," as Caroline Gatt (et al. 2012:139) states. On the one hand, it approaches design in the spirit of symbolic thoughts, concerned with questions how certain thoughts can be realized in material objects, for instance. On the other hand, design comes to anthropology by an ethnographic involvement with people who identify themselves as professional designers. (Gatt et al. 2013) Wendy Gunn labels these two ends as anthropology *for* design, referring to an ethnographic involvement, and anthropology *of* design, referring to a critical reflection of the design process itself, which outcome is a material (or an immaterial: in the case of software design, for instance) object (Gunn 2012). Further, Gunn puts a third notion aside: anthropology *with* design. It is not distinct from the former ones, but is rather a combination of both. Anthropology *with* design positions the ethnographer in a multidisciplinary design process, contributing to both the process and the academic world. By exploring all three approaches to Design Anthropology, the differences between them will be laid out, too.

3.1.1. ANTHROPOLOGY FOR DESIGN

Anthropology *for* design is the use of anthropological methods to inform the design process. Also outside the field of new technologies and human computer interaction, anthropology contributes to design. The designer Kathrina Dankl, for instance, raises the question "what [does] ethnography in a specific locale bring to the practice and thinking around design?" (Dankl 2011:212) She uses ethnographic data of rooms in a senior residence in

¹¹ PARC stands for the Palo Alto Research Center.

Vienna to "build a base for culturally embedded and potentially more meaningful design." (Dankl 2011:213) Dankl is arguing for a 'principal cultural turn in design', because "ethnographic evidence suggests people are assisted by personal things on a nuanced symbolic level, while 'design for the elderly' often fails to correspond to exactly these culturally shaped needs." (Dankl 2011:214) Her study points out how old people are homogenized by material culture on a social and individual level, and argues "that a precious sense of 'self-continuity' is interrupted by goods that do not meet people's own lifestyle and aesthetic preferences." (Dankl 2011:227) For instance, people are socially homogenized when assistive technology manifests aging as a process of impairment and decline. On an individual level, she points out the belittled personal development by restricting the choice of goods one can take into the residence. All of her three informants had to leave material objects, like furniture or jewelry, behind when moving into the senior residence. One of them, Gerlinde, managed to divide her apartment "into three different sections: salon, library, and bedroom, which unite the classic Viennese Altbau style but are concentrated into 31 m²" (Dankl 2011:221). In this example Dankl sees a "continuation of a style she had followed throughout her life." (Dankl 2011:221) Thus, Dankl argues for alternative design proposals which are "more likely to meet people's aspirations. To put it polemically: This briefing would not start with considering a user's diminished muscular strength but with a social user's style, their symbolic and cultural values." (Dankl 2011:215) Anthropology, in Dankl's case, shall contribute to the design briefing, thus to the outline of a product or service which a designer receives at the beginning of a design process. By looking closely at products for elderly people, Dankl argues that instead of thinking in terms of assistance, designers should look at styles as well as at symbolic and cultural values – topics anthropology is concerned with. Anthropology *for* design can provide such data.

3.1.2. ANTHROPOLOGY OF DESIGN

According to Wendy Gunn, anthropology *of* design is concerned with "anthropological theoretical development" (Gunn 2012:9) of design. Since the notion of design itself carries a twofold conception, Adam Drazin and Pauline Garvey distinguish between "design as material object and design as cerebral intention" (Drazin et al. 2009:6). In other words, 'the designed object' against 'having design' (Drazin et al. 2009). The former, the 'designed object', relates to the object itself – the outcome of a design process as manifestation of a symbolic thought. The latter, 'having design', refers to the design process and to the thoughts which might be realized in a material object. Studies concerned with the 'designed object' are interested in how certain objects – architecture and the products of industrial design, service design etc. – are appropriated and used. When dealing with 'designed objects', the point of departure is the

material object; the outcome of a design process. However, when examining 'having design', one conducts research among people who have designs for social change – an improvement in the everyday routines of people, for instance. Hence, the notion of 'having design' addresses the thinking – "design as cerebral intention" (Drazin 2009:4). Studies concerned with 'having design' can be among professional designers in their design processes, and about how designs such as digital technologies, for instance, produce social change.

Lucy Suchman shares an interest in dealing with design "in ways of theorizing change, breaks, ruptures, and the new" (Suchman 2011:3). Especially within societies that figure change in terms of technology and innovativeness, Suchman sees innovation embedded in a broader cultural context. A context "that posits a world that is always lagging, always in need of being brought up to date through the intercessions of those trained to shape it: in sum, in need of design." (Suchman 2011:5) Here, design is not just the process which results in a singular (innovative) artifact, but is brought to a wider consideration of the politics in which design is involved. In this sense, Suchman argues that "design and innovation are best positioned as problematic objects for an anthropology of the contemporary." (Suchman 2011:3) By following Victor Margolin's (2002) argument, who was calling for a more open conception of design practices, Suchman is "thinking of design as a social practice, (...) [by which] we are obliged to consider the condition in what it occurs." (Suchman 2011:6) In a project concerned with 'intelligent machines' she was involved in the early 1990s, Suchman showed how the transformation of human behavior into algorithmic codes was not a unilinear process, "but the crafting together of a collection of diverse materials and accountabilities." (Suchman 2011:8) Within artificial intelligence (AI) projects, interpretive algorithms have to be combined with data structures in such a way that a program will produce a recognizably knowledgeable behavior. The attempt of this project was to bring practical activity under the responsibility of a program. Within a group of specialists of various fields, Suchman's task was to "work across and between, lived experience, scenarios, formalisms, and codes in such a way that each maintained an accountable relation to the others" (Suchman 2011:8). She pictured this assembling of heterogeneous materials of the various fields into a coherent form as a kind of 'craftwork'. And she articulated "the work of designing intelligent machines as a form of embedded social practice – a form made more interesting by AI's own concern with the delegation of social practices to machines" (Suchman 2011:8). Thus, for Suchman, designing or 'having design', as Drazin puts it (Drazin et al. 2009), is not something which is inherent to a single subject purely. Rather – pictured as social practices –, change, breaks and ruptures as well as the new "do not rely on singular origins, definite moments of invention or trajectories of progressive developments." (Suchman 2011:3)

The difference between Suchman und Drazin lies in how they approach the topic of design. Drazin and Garvey argue that "design anthropology (...) gains its leverage through material change (albeit usually after many years of ideas, critiques and conceptualisations)." (Drazin et al. 2009:14) Their starting point is the material object, either in its concrete form or as cerebral intention in the sense of a conceptualization, leading to a specific form. Yet, for Suchman, conceptualizations as well as ideas and critiques are already part of the design process, which is understood as a social practice, and which is therefore an important topic for (design) anthropology. Her interest in the 'new' is close to performative metaphysics. "The new on this understanding is an outcome rather than a starting point of assessment; the similarity that enables the making of difference is not inherent in things but an achievement of relevant discursive and material practices." (Suchman 2011:15) For Suchman, design has to be understood as a process which can be examined. In contrast to her, Drazin sees the central concern of design in "the conception and realization of new things. This materialist trajectory is probably what best distinguishes design anthropology, rather than where it is practised or with what aim." (Drazin et al. 2009:14) Thus, Drazin's conceptions of 'designed objects' and 'having designs' are quite close to Durkheimian social facts, in the sense that both are social representations of symbolic thoughts – material in terms of 'designed objects', and cerebral in terms of 'having designs'. For Suchman, however, the material object is the outcome of a design process, and not the starting point of critical examination. Also, for her, the notion of 'having design' does not take its leverage in the material, but is rather a process than a product.

3.1.3. ANTHROPOLOGY WITH DESIGN

While anthropology *for* and *of* design focus on "the present world of the user, or the what designers need for design" (Gunn 2012:9), there is also a third approach, namely anthropology *with* design: the engagement of anthropologists working in a multidisciplinary team with designers. Such an attempt might appear quite similar to Suchman's involvement in design projects. Yet, while Suchman positions design as a topic for anthropological examination, some of the scholars in the field of anthropology *with* design are even "interested in design as a way of doing anthropology, and anthropology as a way of doing design." (Kjærsgaard et al. 2012:188) This perspective comes quite close to what Grimshaw and Ravetz (2015) write about the ethnographic turn and the art world, when they state that "the ethnographic turn in contemporary art practice has offered a new, generative point of engagement with the discipline. On the one hand, it suggested ways of expanding anthropological practice and modes of representation, while, on the other, it has established potential ground for experiments in collaboration and exchange." (Grimshaw et al. 2015:423) However, Grimshaw

regrets that collaborations of anthropologists with artistic productions such as films, exhibitions, photo-essays or soundscapes are "all too often (...) seen as secondary to proper anthropology or understood as a sort of popularisation." (Grimshaw et al. 2015:419) And "precisely because of the anomalous location of our practice, we have been reluctant to eschew a commitment to anthropology for art or vice versa." (Grimshaw et al. 2015:419) As an example, Grimshaw names Joseph Beuys with his interest in anthropology. With reference to Beuys' performances, in which he positioned the artist as a healer, Grimshaw argues that one could "see that not only were his performances recognisably anthropological – that is, in undergoing a shamanic or possession ritual his performance presented itself as a recognisable anthropological object for analysis. But, at the same time, he performed (and appropriated a certain conception of) the role of an ethnographer – the shaman-fieldworker plumbing the depths of experience, disoriented and displaced as precondition for knowledge of 'another kind'." (Grimshaw et al. 2015:423) Grimshaw states that a "new anthropological dialogue with contemporary art has led to a reconceptualisation of research as a kind of making and suggested new creative possibilities for the discipline" (Grimshaw et al. 2015:431). Grimshaw's notion of 'dialogue' carries her "own experiences of being positioned on the fault-line between art and anthropology." (Grimshaw 2015:419) She struggled with her products, for example, films and exhibitions – sometimes "pursued under the rubric of 'visual-anthropology'" (Grimshaw 2015:419) – "to make an effective argument for non-traditional forms (...) to be taken seriously as anthropology." (Grimshaw 2015:419) In this sense, Grimshaw's position is one of an ethnographer as artist – an anthropologist whose artistic production enters in alternative forms of knowledge representation. Within such a view, the gap between anthropology and art – be it film and exhibition making by anthropologists, or be it ethnography as in Beuys' performances – becomes vague.

When the artist is positioned as ethnographer, Hal Foster warned of what he called "pseudo-ethnographic" (Foster 1996:180). He understood this as a condition in which "few principles of the ethnographic participant-observer are observed, let alone critiqued, and only limited engagement of the community is effected. Almost naturally the project strays from collaboration to self-fashioning, from a decentering of the artist as cultural authority to a remaking of the other in neo-primitivist guise." (Foster 1996:196–197) Indeed, one could find what Foster names 'pseudo-ethnographic' also in the field of design. In the exhibition *2051: Smart Life in the City*, part of the Vienna Biennale 2015 at the Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art in Vienna, the designer Julia Landsiedl invited to 'Shopping-Spotting'. The installation's intention was to observe "dying-out shopping-types and their behavior in today's territory of commodities" (<http://www.wienmitte-themall.at/news-events/vienna-biennale>), in a mall in Vienna. Next to exhibited binoculars, the wall text corresponding to 'Shopping-

Spotting' labeled this observation as a 'design-ethnographic' method. By no means ethnography has something to do with the methods of ornithology like the binoculars the designer provided suggest. Rather, this project reflects Foster's accurate critique when he writes: "Killed as culture, the local and the every-day can be revived as simulacrum¹², a 'theme' for a park or a 'history' in a mall, and site-specific work can be drawn into this zombification of the local and every-day, this Disney version of site specific." (Foster 1996:197) Landsiedl's understanding of 'ethnography' might be an exception among designers, yet it shows the problems which can arise in collaborations between the two fields – in regard to artists or designers doing anthropology, and anthropologists doing art or design.

But, anthropology *with* design is neither concerned with applying techniques of design to anthropology, nor is it searching for alternative forms of representation. On the contrary: anthropology *with* design refers to collaborations between anthropologists and designers, working together in multidisciplinary teams. Mette Kjærsgaard defines these collaborations as something which "is not about providing detailed descriptions of current user practices as fuel for the designer's imagination of future products, but rather about exploring and working with conceptualizations and reframing relations between people and things, in order to enhance the crafting potential of both designers and users." (Kjærsgaard 2012:188) In her example of a design-game – a playful design method (Ehn 2008) – around the re-design of a playground she was involved in, she points out the enhanced potential of these collaborations. Kids were asked in this participatory project to "use the various props provided to reconfigure the playground and then subsequently perform a game" (Kjærsgaard 2012:182). The kids were enthusiastic in preparing the game by attaching materials on the structures of the playground, but seemed quite uninterested in playing the game after they had finished. A girl expressed that it was fun to build it, but they didn't bother about playing with it afterwards. A designer asked, if the girl knew why they had build it and if they had had a plan, but for the girl it was just about building (Kjærsgaard 2012). Kjærsgaard argues that "the designer's focus was on the outcome of the activity (the scenario and the redesigned playground) whereas the girls were simply absorbed in building and designing as a form of play." (Kjærsgaard 2012:184) Collaborations of anthropology with design are therefore not concerned with the outcome of a process, as it may be a re-designed playground as representation of anthropological knowledge, but rather with the process itself. In reference to the playground project she was involved, Kjærsgaard concludes that "reframing participatory design activities as a form of designoriented anthropological fieldwork brought new and potentially interesting aspects of play, childhood, and their relation to design into view, and challenged the predefined

¹² I see simulacrum in Foster's text very close to Roland Barthes' understanding of the word – seen as an intellectual addition to an object (Barthes 2008).

frameworks for understanding play and design, through which the activities were originally conducted and interpreted." (Kjærsgaard 2012:186)

Thus, anthropology *with* design is not concerned with doing design, but describes an active involvement of anthropologists in the design process – contributing to this process with their anthropological expertise. Therefore, the engagement of anthropologists "can provide a critical contribution to both anthropology and design. With such an understanding of anthropology with design, the field of Design Anthropology not only remains in the realm of critical discourse, but can also provide constructive critique aiming towards rethinking what design and innovation could be." (Gunn 2012:12) In this sense, it could be argued that anthropology with design is to some extent a combination between anthropology *for* and anthropology *of* design, though, it reaches further. While being involved within a design process, the example of Kjærsgaard shows that anthropology can inform the design process, as well as it can contribute to the understanding what the design process is and what is happening therein. Kjærsgaard pointed out the contradiction between the children and the designer regarding the design process itself: "From the designer's perspective (...) re-designing the playground was merely preparations for the 'real' game (the future scenario) that would follow, whereas for the children building was play, rather than simply preparations for it." (Kjærsgaard 2012:184) Only by shifting the focus away from the final product and to the complex interactions between both parties in the design process, anthropology "brought new and potentially interesting aspects of play, childhood, and their relation to design into view, and challenged the pre-defined frameworks for understanding play and design" (Kjærsgaard 2012:186). This twofold contribution, however, allows the field of Design Anthropology to not only examine the design process itself – in the sense of anthropology *of* design –, but also to challenge practices and considerations within the process.

Yet, when Mette Kjærsgaard calls for a 'design as anthropology' and 'anthropology as design', a critique can only be precise, when we consider to which level of the design process her statement refers to. By understanding the design process as the realization of something new – as it is commonly referred to –, most of the time we think in categories of what can be called 'operative design' (Kobuss 2012). Work on this level is embodied by a designer sitting behind his/her drawing board, creating something new. However, according to Joachim Kobuss – who is a design consultant – the operative level is only one aspect to which designers can contribute. Above operative design lies what he calls 'planning design'. It describes the process during which the framework is created for a new product or service. On a vertical scale above planning design Kobuss (2012) positions 'analytic design', which concerns the question what kind of design product or service is needed (for commercial success, for instance). By looking

at examples in the three fields of design anthropology, Kobuss' division between these levels becomes clear. When Kathrina Dankl claims for a more culturally informed design briefing (Dankl 2011), the designer's role is clearly positioned on the level of operative design – behind a drawing board. In her example of inhabitants of a senior residence, she argued that design briefings should focus on styles and their symbolic and cultural values, rather than on decreasing physiologic strength (2011). The designer's role is to create something new based on the information she/he gets through the briefing, containing what others have analyzed and planned. However, when Kjærsgaard speaks of 'anthropology as design', it would make no sense to place it on the operative level, since the actual creation of a product is clearly the task of designers. If an anthropologist tried to create a computer interface based on a design briefing, the result would definitely lack in quality and usability. Simply, just because she/he isn't trained in it – the result would be closer to a do-it-yourself attempt than to a design product. Hence, to include anthropology into the design process, one has to look at the operations happening before a briefing is written.

Thinking of Lucy Suchman's example of artificial intelligence (2011), she was not involved in a process where the task was to give shape to an actual machine which is intelligent, as it would be on the level of 'operational design'. Rather, the example she describes is located on the level of 'planning design': Suchman was involved in a multidisciplinary team whose task was to find a way how data structures and intelligent, interpretive algorithms can be combined in a program, which makes a machine producing recognizably knowledgeable behavior. Summarizing, one can think of 'operative design' as the level of execution, while 'planning design' is concerned with the conceptualization.

Hence, when Kjærsgaard (2012) speaks about 'anthropology as design' – or, vice versa, about 'design as anthropology' – she doesn't reflect on the point of execution, since her example is not concerned with the final result of a design process. For her, it "is not so much the methods and the techniques through which design and field material is produced, but rather the frameworks through which design activities and results are contextualized that are important for making meaningful interpretations and innovative design moves." (Kjærsgaard 2012:185) In this sense, "anthropology actively engages with the practices, perspectives, agendas, and contexts of both use and design by framing and challenging understanding within and relations between them." (Kjærsgaard 2012:187) This kind of active engagement within 'analytical design' is what Kjærsgaard pictures as 'anthropology as design' – not being characterized by simply reflecting on the process of design, but also by influencing it. Anthropology as design therefore means to "engage with each other's practices and perspectives." (Kjærsgaard 2012:188) So, anthropology as design (or vice versa) is nothing more than the involvement of anthropologists within a creative process – a design process, which "purpose is to create

products, processes and services that transform reality" (Otto 2013:3). Others might call such collaborations 'design thinking', pictured as "the concrete interplay and interconnection of signs, things, actions, and thoughts." (Buchanan 1992:19) Design thinking "points, for example, toward the impossibility of rigid boundaries between industrial design, engineering, and marketing (...) toward the impossibility of relying on any one of the sciences (natural, social, or humanistic) for adequate solutions" (Buchanan 1992:20). It is because of these overlapping spaces of various disciplines such as design and anthropology that global design companies like IDEO, for instance, who are engaged with 'design thinking' for innovation and business designs, explicitly hire people educated in social anthropology (Kelley et al. 2014). Hence, design anthropology in terms of anthropology *with* design is understood as collaboration, as active engagement of anthropologists in the design process; as an activity on the intersection of various disciplines, involving designers, marketers, engineers – and also anthropologists.

3.1.4. CONCLUSION

Ton Otto, in her introduction to *Design Anthropology In Theory and Practice* (2013), pictures the engagement of anthropology in design processes as Design Anthropology, leading to the following characterization. First, "design is (almost) always a process of collaboration between different disciplines and stakeholders, including designers, researchers, producers and users." (Otto et al. 2013:4) Anthropological research informs the design process by its specific methods to create products and services, while it also critically reflects on the process itself: either to develop the process – as Suchman did in her example (2011) – or to contribute to the academic discipline. Second, "design (...) with both process and product [is] aiming specifically at intervention in existing realities" (Otto et al. 2013:3). Also anthropologists do share an interest in social transformations – in ruptures and changes of social realities. Again, anthropology can contribute to both: to the design process of analyzing and planning by applying its theoretical concepts, and to the academic discourse to gain more insight into how and why products and services can produce change. Third, "design is clearly future oriented; its success is measured by the relevance the designed product and conceptual solutions have for people's everyday life." (Otto et al. 2013:3) The interest in people's imaginations of the future is the intersection to anthropology, yet, according to Otto, the "discipline lacks tools and practices to actively engage and collaborate in people's formation of their future. One of design anthropology's challenges is to develop such tools and practices." (Otto et al. 2013:3) Summing up, Otto's conception of Design Anthropology argues for a "relevance of ethnography in and for design as more than simply a methodology for the study of a readily available world of users outside the design studio." (Otto et al. 2013:7)

Although Design Anthropology is an emerging field, literature specifically addressing it is still limited. Notably, there are three major contributions on the topic. In *Design Anthropology in Theory and Practice*, Ton Otto and Wendy Gunn state that "Design Anthropology is characterized by a particular use of theory aimed at generating concepts and new frameworks or perspectives." (Otto et al. 2013:11) For both the design process and for anthropology, as I have shown. Alison Clarke (2011), on the other hand, focuses on relations between objects and subjects as well as between production and use. Her reader *Design Anthropology* (2011) assembles some of the main figures of anthropology in material culture, such as Daniel Miller and Pauline Garvey – hence, "brings together key thinkers and practitioners involved in making and theorizing our contemporary material and immaterial world: its rituals, its aesthetics and its interactions" (Clarke 2011:9). Clarke's focus is on the social processes which shape products as well as experiences. Wendy Gunn's and Jared Donovan's volume *Design and Anthropology* (2012) shifts the focus of Design Anthropology towards a broader conceptual understanding, "away from a problem orientated approach, away from the standard trajectory of one situated context of use. (...) We would argue that in building closer relations between using and producing, designing and using, people and things, a move is required away from a problem-oriented approach towards designing." (Gunn et al. 2012:1) Their reader gathers thinkers of anthropology, design and philosophy to emphasize social aspects of creativity in design.

After exploring the field of Design Anthropology, one question is inevitable: What has this all to do with *dwelling*? Aren't we buying furniture we like and feel comfortable with it at IKEA rather than commissioning a carpenter to produce them to our needs? Aren't we moving into flats which layouts are already designed? Aren't we rather using designed objects as decorations in our flats instead of creating or owns? Yes, we do – in a way, but only to some extent. For aren't we also buying magazines and books which give us inspiration for turning floor plans into homes? Aren't we decorating walls with color, wallpaper and pictures? Aren't we engaged in one or the other do-it-yourself project concerning our flats? By building hight-beds, just as it was in the case of Gustav, improving furniture or creating decoration items? In these practices householders are not the users of designed objects, but are rather creators according to their individual plan. But, are they designers, too?

3.2. WHO DESIGNS?

If one considers the profession of designers, "most design disciplines are named after what they produce, after what kinds of solutions they provide. (...) We are defined by what we produce." (Redström 2013:9) If we picture an architectural designer, we immediately have an

idea of what kind of things he is creating, namely houses. The same goes with industrial designers, graphic designers or interior designers – we know how their products look like and how they differ from each other. Interestingly, there are some products which, although they are designed and produced, only gain their relevance by use. The "so-called personal computer is an interesting example: while the form of its casing may be largely identified as the work of a certain design team, its form in a wider sense – that which makes this particular artefact into what it is – also includes all the documents, images, music, software, and even hardware created or modified by the user herself, by open source communities, and so on." (Redström 2008:411) Within the possibilities of digital technologies, Adam Drazin points out that "nowadays, you don't just buy and listen to music, you also have a set of skills, software and tools by which you work with the media. A person who buys a digital product is no longer a consumer in the same sense, but is also a producer" (Drazin 2012:260). This is why he argues further that "design, then, is becoming a popular public activity and it potentially signifies shifts in the balance of power and expertise between companies and publics." (Drazin 2012:260–261) Here, Drazin concedes design to users of new technologies. Design then is not something which is made by designers and consumed by users – similar to a cake which is made to a personal recipe and a cake which is bought, as Drazin puts it. "As digital skills become popularized, and material things more digitalized, more of our world could become like the cakes we have baked than those we have bought." (Drazin 2012:261) When thinking in terms of dwelling as a staying with things, digitalization plays a subordinate role. However, keeping up with the analogy of baking cakes to a personal recipe, do-it-yourself (DIY) improvements and projects have a long history within households – households might even be the place of origin of DIY (Fineder et al. 2016). If design for Drazin is a 'popular and public activity', simply because users are no longer just using but also are producing, the question is: who designs within households?

3.2.1. THE HOUSEHOLDER AS DESIGNER?

Daniel Miller argues in Clarke's reader on Design Anthropology (2011) that, on the one hand, we could treat householders as museums curators, and, on the other, as interior designers. As museums curators in the sense of "to feel responsible for and look after, the objects in your possession." (Miller 2011:89) As interior designers, "since they may care just as much about the aesthetics and the order of their display as for the content." (Miller 2011:95) In this sense, one could argue along with Miller that Gustav's cave, I have described in the previous chapter (see 2.3.3.), is to some extent a museum in which he cares about the objects in his possession. Gustav's cave was full of objects which had a strong relation to the people around him; a book, for instance, which was a present of an ex-girlfriend, reminding him of her, or a piece of

cloth purchased on a trip to India with a friend. "For most people, it is more a case of objects that speak to different times of their life. When a person becomes elderly their possessions may start to seem like a museum that amount to a *précis* of their past" (Miller 2011:92). Just as it is in the case of Gustav's room, with all the memories which tell about different times and occasions in Gustav's life. Miller, for his part, gives the example of Marina. Marina is keeping a collection of McDonald's toys as an objectification of the relations between herself as a full-time working mother and her kids, as well as of an ambivalent relationship between herself and her parents. The argument is that Marina doesn't express herself through the McDonald's toys, but creates – in terms of 'designs' – herself by them (Miller 2008, 2011). This bears a rather "complicated politics of design (...) here, in which the perspectives of professional designers engage with the perspectives of users-as-designers." (Drazin 2009:6). By considering Miller's suggestion a bit more in detail, the problematic of picturing the user-as-designer becomes clear.

When Miller argues "to be a museums curator suggests that at least some (...) objects will be chosen for public display (...) they may be evidence of taste (...). (...) it is very rare indeed that we could enter into the front room of our next-door neighbor and not to expect to be confronted with some sort of public display chosen from the possessions of that household." (Miller 2011:89) He clearly uses the museums curator as a metaphor which helps him to shift towards material objects – the household and its possessions in this case "start to seem like a museum" (Miller 2011:92). Indeed, one could draw some parallels to Museum Anthropology and especially to the museums effect, which "tendency is to isolate something from its world to offer it up for attentive looking and thus transform it" (Alpers 1991:26–27). Hence, what the 'museums effect' actually transforms is the quality of the object. By taking an axe, for instance, and placing it in a museum for attentive looking, the axe is not useable anymore. To some extent this could be paralleled with Marina's McDonald's toys, which aren't toys for her, in the sense that she plays with them, but are something else – an objectification of a rather complex relationship.

It is nothing new within Museum Anthropology that "(...) museums professionals must be conscious about what they do and why and they should inform the public that what it sees is not material that speaks for itself but material filtered through the tastes, interests and politics and states of knowledge of particular presenters of particular moments in time" (Vogel 1991:201). Therefore, the "fact that museums re-contextualize and interpret objects is a given" (Vogel 1991:201). Yet, Miller's conception of the objects in a museum, which he parallels to households, is actually closer to what Attfield labels as 'wild things' (Attfield 2000). The notion of wildness refers to the elusive nature of things, which can be interpreted differently in various cultural contexts and can be re-contextualized. Even if Miller pictures

households as single cultural units¹³ – as he did in *The Comfort of Things* (Miller 2008) – Attfield's notion of 'wild things' is more convincing than Miller's metaphor of a museums curator. However, Miller needs the metaphor of the museum to get to another point. Miller is, as I discussed in the previous chapter (see 2.3.), dealing with a dialectical understanding of the world where all relations, whether to material objects or to human beings, are dialectical in nature (Miller 1998, 2010). By picturing all objects in a household as something which had to be sublated by the householder at one point of time, Miller treats the householders as museums curators – as persons who live in a personal museum of their own objectifications – caring about their social relations to objects. This becomes clear when he states "treating householders as though they were museums curators (...) [to] understand how they relate to particular objects and why they may choose to display them" (Miller 2011:95). Objects, like furniture, enter the field of social relations and thus become part of oneself. Miller exemplifies this by creating the analogy that householders are museums curators. In terms that the householder cares about the established social relations just as the museums curator cares about objects in her/his collection and chooses which ones to display. This kind of displaying can be found elsewhere in Miller's writings, namely, when he states that "this world confronts us as material culture and continues to evolve through us" (Miller 2005:8).

The second part of Miller's analogy – the householder as designer – is achieved by arguing that "actually, the core objects may be ones that are of particular importance today, not just the things a person curates but that which helps them to become a curator, organizing the relation to their past and their present." (Miller 2011:92) Hence, the householder is creating herself through objects. This echoes "the idea that objects make us, as part of the very same process by which we make them" (Miller 2010:60), and makes clear that Miller's contribution to this topic is at its core nothing else than a dialectical theory of material culture (Miller 1998, 2010). Miller's analogy of the householder as designer primarily reflects on "designing ourselves (...). [Designers] are not just trying to earn a living through their designing practices, they are using material culture as a means of ordering a multitude of relationships to all the people they know, their family, friends, possible visitors to their house, and to all the multiple aspects of themselves." (Miller 2010:98) The idea of designing oneself is that interior decoration does not represent oneself, but is the locus of becoming oneself through the creative consumption of home decorations, like furniture. Miller suggests that designing can be pictured as the establishing and ordering of social relations, as he exemplified with Marina and her collection of McDonald's toys (Miller 2011), or as I did with the example of Gustav in the previous chapter (see 2.3.3.).

¹³ See also chapter 2.5. where I elaborated on this conception.

Miller pictures design in terms of the establishment and creation of social relations. Yet, this aspect of novelty in establishing and creating social relations is already implied in Miller's concept of objectification – which does obviously also underly his text in Clarke's reader (2012) – in the sense that material objects can endlessly be appropriated, in means of being sublated (see chapter 2.2.), to become oneself. "Home consumer products can be endlessly personalized and become as much part of the modern self as craft products in small-scale societies" (Tilley 2006b:68) – this point also reflects how anthropology understood design in small-scale societies (Conkey 2006). Consequentially, Miller pictures the householder as designer. Yet, for Miller consumption is the key to a dialectical understanding of the world, in the sense of how things are consumed. When he suggests that his householders are designers specialized in interior decoration, Miller already indicates this point. An interior designer uses consumer goods to achieve something new. Hence, 'to design' in Miller's context is actually a form of creative appropriation and therefore a form of using. Clearly, by stating that the householder is a designer, Miller wanted to point out the generative aspect of his theory of material culture. For instance, when he writes that "we have to understand this interior decoration not just as a passive representation of a life but an active process" (Miller 2011:97). Yet, the marxist critique on this form of material culture studies, which I exemplified with Grabner (2011) in the previous chapter (see chapter 2.4.), tends to forget about the aspect of producing – in the sense how new things are conceptualized and realized, or, in other words, how they are designed. While material culture studies are either concerned with the makers of artifacts, picturing all others as consumers of things, or are concerned with consumption leaving out how things come into being, Design Anthropology sets itself apart from material culture "in so far as it sets out to question the separation of production from consumption and the precedence of design over use." (Gunn 2012:10)

Marilyn Strathern, in her preface to *Consuming Technologies* (Silverstone et al. 1992), pictured people who were consuming technologies in domestic space not as designers but as 'processors'. Her notion of the 'processor' (1992) described the user as the "author of how things will be consumed" (Strathern 1992:xiii). But, as Strathern pointed out, "these domestic consumers are (...) not the primary producers. What they bring to the technologies are their experiences (...). The consumer is a processor, the turner of things into social and cultural values." (Strathern 1992:xii) In her understanding, the process of consumption is self-referential – "What they bring to the technologies are their experiences" (Strathern 1992:xi) – and the process of consumption produces experience itself. Miller's analogy of the householder as designer – following a dialectical thinking – becomes problematic in this sense. In his example of Marina and her collection of McDonald's toys, he was arguing that Marina is

a designer by ordering and creating social relationships. Yet, in Strathern's view, Marina turns the toys into (individual) social values, and is therefore a processor and by no means a designer. So, Miller's suggestion of treating the householder as designer is simply an equation of appropriation and design. Moreover, his suggestion does not properly fit into the field of Design Anthropology: neither does his suggestion fit anthropology *of* design, in terms of critically reflecting the design process, nor does his contribution have anything to do with anthropology *with* design, in terms of being involved in a design process. It rather tries to inform the design process – as anthropology *for* design – by pointing out that material things are appropriated by people. In doing so, he alloys the position of professional designers with users-as-designers.

3.2.2. IF WE ARE ALL DESIGNERS

Indeed, Miller is not alone in stating that design is an activity that householders – or anybody else – can perform. The designer Victor Papanek¹⁴ or the psychologist Donald Norman did so in a similar way. Papanek defined design as the "consciousness and intuitive effort to impose meaningful order." (Papanek 1984:4) For Papanek, who argued for a participatory and democratic design practice, examples of design are "composing an epic poem, executing a mural, painting a masterpiece, writing a concerto. But design is also cleaning and reorganizing a desk drawer, pulling an impacted tooth, baking an apple pie, choosing sides for a backlot basketball game, and educating a child" (Papanek 1984:3). Yet, Papanek didn't argue against his own profession – for him, all kinds of problems around the world could be solved by design. Hence, from his point of view, the role of the designer was to make an impact to solve these problems. "Being designers, we can pay by giving ten percent of our crop of ideas and talents to the seventy five percent of mankind in need." (Papanek 1984:68) Yet, this is no contradiction of his statement that "all men are designers" (Papanek 1984:3) – in reading Papanek closely, this statement refers to a critique on his fellow designers.

By giving the example of his 'Tin Can Radio', Papanek exemplifies his critique. Initiated by the United States Army, he "designed and developed a new type of communications device" (Papanek 1984:224) in 1966, directed towards illiterate people in India who neither had "enough power for radios, nor money for batteries, (...) effectively cut off from all news and communication." (Papanek 1984:224) His radio consisted of used tin cans, filled with paraffin wax and a wick which burned and produced just enough energy for earplug speakers. This one-directional radio – receiving all broadcasting stations at one time – could be used to listen

¹⁴ Miller's text was published in Alison Clarke's reader, who is head of the Victor J. Papanek Foundation, which is based at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna.

to daily news for five minutes "for a year until the original paraffin wax is gone. Then, more wax, wood, paper, dried cow dung (which has been successfully used as a heat source for centuries in Asia), or for that matter anything else that burns could continue to keep the unit in service." (Papanek 1984:225) Since the U. S. Army was too afraid of "if a Communist (...) gets to the microphone" (Papanek 1984:226), eventually the UNESCO showed interest in bringing Papanek's radio to the people in Indonesia.¹⁵ A year later, he presented his 'Tin Can Radio' at the Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm, Germany, where "it was viewed with dismay because of its 'ugliness' and lack of 'formal' design." (Papanek 1984:227) The people at Ulm suggested to paint it grey, "but painting it would have been wrong. For one thing, it would have raised the price of each unit (...). Secondly, and much more importantly, I feel that I have no right to make aesthetic or 'good taste' decisions that will affect millions of people in Indonesia, who are members of a different culture." (Papanek 1984:227) Subsequently, Papanek pointed out that people in Indonesia decorated their 'Tin Can Radios' with various materials, such as shells, pieces of glass, paper and colored felt. "In this way it has been possible to by-pass 'good taste', design directly for the needs of the people, and 'build in' a chance for the people to make the design truly their own." (Papanek 1984:227)

So, when Papanek states that "all men are designers" (Papanek 1984:4), he addresses the point of formal (aesthetic) appearance. As the 'Tin Can Radio' example shows, he was not interested in some kind of formal language of design referring to the radio's visual appearance – painting the recycled can grey, for instance – rather, Papanek addressed social and ecological problems design could contribute to. Moreover, when he describes how Indonesians 'make the design truly their own', he talks about the decoration of the radio and how people appropriate his design rather than of the designed product itself. For Papanek, design is not exclusively concerned with the visual appearance of a product, but rather with the idea behind a product. Thus, his statement that all men are designers could be understood as a provocation directed to the design world then – exemplified by the anecdote of his visit at the Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm – rather than as a generalized observation.

Donald Norman, on the other hand, pictures design closer to Miller's analogy of the householder as designer. "Through these personal acts of design, we transform the otherwise anonymous, commonplace things and spaces of everyday life into our own things and places. Through our designs, we transform houses into homes, spaces into places, things into belongings." (Norman 2004:224) This strongly reminds of the perception of design as some kind of appropriation of alienated consumer products. Yet, similarly to Papanek, Norman

¹⁵ When Papanek points out that neither the UNESCO, nor any manufacturer, nor himself made any profit out of the radio, it shows that he was more interested in design as a form of knowledge transfer, rather than in design as vital element of a business model.

argues that "we are all designers. We manipulate the environment, the better to serve our needs." (Norman 2004:224) Indeed, practices such as reorganizing a desk or rearranging the furniture of a living room could feature elements of design – as well in regard to aspects of visual appearance as to the idea behind. Also, do-it-yourself attempts can be pictured in the light of creating something that serves personal needs. So, is everything design and are we all designers?

Enzo Manzini (2015) suggests a distinction between 'diffusive design' performed by anyone, and 'expert design' performed by those who are professionally trained at art schools. Diffusive design in Manzini's terms could be described with the picture of a laboratory in which matchless solutions, forms and meanings are created, "as a huge laboratory of sociotechnical experimentation" (Manzini 2015:54), while expert design is needed to help those making diffusive design to do so. Manzini's distinction differentiates Norman's suggestion that everyone is a designer by drawing attention to those whose profession is design. In the picture of Drazin's vision of the digitalization of the material world (Drazin 2012), design as a 'popular public activity' would refer to diffusive design in Manzini's terms. Here, expert designers are providing digital tools such as software architecture, hardware, templates and so on, which makes design as a popular activity possible. Yet, Manzini doesn't picture diffusive and expert design as two different pairs of shoes, but rather as two shoes of the same pair. "In our connected world, where everybody interacts with everybody else almost independently of time and distance, this separation of the design team from the rest of the world no longer stands (...) So, in a connected world, all designing processes are in fact co-designing processes" (Manzini 2015:48). The role of expert design therefore is to "trigger and support these open-ended co-design processes using their design knowledge to conceive and enhance clear-cut focused design initiatives." (Manzini 2015:54)

The separation between experts and non-experts suggested by Manzini, appears as a useful distinction with regard to the question who designs – for Manzini pictures design close to human talents which "may evolve into a skill and sometimes into a discipline (...): everybody can run, but not everybody takes part in the marathon and few become professional athletes" (Manzini 2015:37). Although, when dealing with Design Anthropology – an anthropology *of* and also *with* design – it is inadequate to look at human practices and then call them design – rather, the starting point must be the practice of professional designers themselves. Only by understanding what expert design is, one can start to define what diffusive design could be.

3.2.3. IL DISEGNO

Designing is generally described as "to conceive of an idea and plan it out, give form, structure and function to that idea, before executing it in the world." (Otto et al. 2014:1) Such a description lays the emphasis on the idea – and since professional designers are largely educated at art schools, it can be perceived as an artistic idea which is fundamental to the process. To shed light on this artistic idea, a short excursion into art history seems useful. Another reason for this excursion – which might appear odd for native speakers – is the German connotation of the word 'design'. The word has, different to other languages, no equivalent in German and is far more limited to creative production than it is, for example, in English. Actually, its meaning appears closer to the notion of 'disegno' than to the English sense of the word 'design'.

The term 'disegno' – in Italian literally meaning 'drawing' – undertook a transformation during Renaissance. As Wolfgang Kemp (1974) demonstrated, the term was used to distinguish artists from craftsmen. Through the medium 'disegno' the artist became an originator rather than a generator of his works. At the outset, the notion 'disegno' described the preliminary expression of a mental outline. The architect, artist and art-theorist Giorgio Vasari introduced a different understanding of the notion: he shifted it further towards the forming of an idea according to artistic necessities and natural laws as well as its realization in an artwork (Kemp 1974). For Vasari, 'disegno' is the father of architecture, sculpture and painting (Vasari 2006). In his *Introduzione alle tre arti del disegno* (1568), Vasari starts from architecture, since architecture is for him as much a figurative art as sculpture, but he argues that the part of an artist ends by making the drawing – il disegno – of a building. "For the architects those [drawings] mean beginning and ending of their art, since everything else is the work exclusively by masons and bricklayers by means of wooden models conducted of the lines [of the drawing]." (Vasari 2006:99) The same goes with paintings: it is the drawing and outlay of a painting which is produced by the medium 'disegno', and not the entire painting itself. Hence, 'disegno' is not concerned with the execution of an idea, in terms of the act of painting or building a structure, and is therefore to be distinguished from the work of masons and bricklayers. Although the division between design and execution had already been made before Vasari in architecture (Burioni 2006), Vasari took the medium of 'disegno' as basic principle to all three arts he introduces – exemplified by the 'botteghe' of these times where fellow artists painted out the drawings of their teachers. By distinguishing between design and execution, the arts were shifted towards academia, and artists gained a different – meaning higher – social standing than craftsmen (Kemp 1974).

Vasari's notion of 'disegno' offers a twofold reading. On the one hand, it is the drawing itself, on the other hand, it is the idea¹⁶ behind the drawing. Vasari describes 'disegno' as an artistic medium which is not creating a depictive representation or mimesis of nature, but allows the artist to succeed by his knowledge about nature, to create the idea of objects in nature (Kemp 1974). This kind of creation of objects through an idea led later, as Kemp showed, to the understanding of 'disegno' as a "proper, divine and nature-like, creative principle." (Kemp 1974:235) By the 'creative principle' – 'disegno' – the artist brings objects such as sculptures, paintings and houses into being. Thus, the medium 'disegno' also embeds a conception of invention, since it refers to the creation of objects.¹⁷ While an earlier notion of 'disegno' had implied studying and training in drawing nature (Kemp 1974), the late Renaissance connotation increasingly referred to the aspect of creative invention into the world – "quasi un altro Nume, un'altra Natura produttiva, in cui vivono le cose artificiali" (Zuccari cited in Kemp 1974:232). Hence, the creative principle does not depict nature in arts, but rather invents its own nature.

Nowadays, it appears that this creative principle is as relevant as it was in the sixteenth century. "In a global community market with an insatiable appetite for new things, where every aspect of life and art is convertible into an object of fascination or desire to be appropriated and consumed, creativity has come to be seen as a major driver of economic prosperity" (Ingold et al. 2007:1). In this world which is "always lagging" (Suchman 2011:5), always in need to be brought up to date – "in need of design" (Suchman 2011:5) – it is design which saturates the need of new, innovative things and services (or even practices, when looking at social design). Though, the creative principal in design, which brings innovations into being, is still pictured as a "process of thought" (Otto et al. 2013:1) – as an idea manifested in a drawing, almost god-like achieved and thrown into the world; producing change, rupture and "intervention in existing realities" (Otto et al. 2013:3).

3.2.4. INNOVATION VS. IMPROVISATION

John Liep defines "creativity as activity that produces something new through the recombination and transformation of existing cultural practices or forms" (Liep 2001:2). He distinguishes between 'conventional creativity' as a "more conventional exploration of possibilities within a certain framework of rules" (Liep 2001:2), and 'true creativity' which

¹⁶ See Erwin Panofsky's seminal work *Idea* (1989), where he laid out how the Renaissance theorists and especially Vasari were influenced by the re-reading of Plato (Neoplatonism).

¹⁷ Vasari was speaking of invention – *inventione* – for example in his *Vite* (1550) on Leonardo da Vinci, where the word's connotation does not refer to innovation, but rather to the composition of figurative elements. For Vasari, *disegno*, *inventione* and *colore* are the three elements of painting, yet *inventione* not being inferior to *disegno* (Irle 1997).

marks radical disjunctures and therefore transforms existing cultural forms or practices. Liep defines the first as improvisation, and the latter as innovation (Liep 2001). By thinking in terms of design, one is clearly dealing with the latter notion of creativity – 'true creativity'. Yet, Elisabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold criticize this notion of creativity as something which "stands out here and there, marking new moments of disjuncture" (Ingold et al. 2007:2). They argue that by distinguishing between improvisation and innovation "the former characterizes creativity by way of its process, the latter by way of its products." (Ingold et al. 2007:2)

To equate creativity with innovation – coming up with something new, a product or a service – is for Hallam and Ingold a backwards reading, which is "symptomatic of modernity, finds in creativity a power not so much of adjustment and response to the conditions of a world-information as of liberation from the constraints of a world which is already made" (Ingold et al. 2007:3). A backwards reading is in some sense what Gell calls the 'abduction of agency' (Gell 1998), by which someone can, for example, abduct friendliness from a person smiling in a picture (see chapter 2.2.1.). This kind of reading starts out with the object itself, like the picture in Gell's example, and comes to the conclusion, by reading it backwards, that the person on the picture was smiling when the shutter button was pressed. In a similar way, one could argue according to the concept of 'disegno' that the lines on a paper are a representation of the idea in mind. Thus, "to read creativity as innovation is (...) to read it backwards, in terms of its results, instead of forwards, in terms of the movements that gave rise to them." (Ingold et al. 2007:2–3) Hence, when reading creativity forwards, in terms of the process in which forms are created, Ingold argues that creativity is closer to improvisation – closer to the probing of possibilities within a certain setting, rather than "marking unique moments of radical disjuncture" (Ingold et al. 2007:2). In terms of design, as creative production, this means that design cannot be seen as innovation, in regard to the production of novelty, but rather as an act of improvisation – a process within certain possibilities. Ingold and Hallam make "four points about improvisation. First, it is generative, in the sense that it gives rise to the phenomenal forms of culture as experienced by those who live by them or in accord with them. Second, it is relational, in that it is continually attuned and responsive to the performance of others. Third, it is temporal, meaning that it cannot be collapsed into an instant, or even a series of instants, but embodies a certain duration." (Ingold et al. 2007:1) And forth, "improvisation is the way we work, not only in the ordinary conduct of our everyday lives, but also in our studied reflections on these lives in fields of art, literature and science." (Ingold et al. 2007:1)

Dealing with the aspect of temporality, Ingold and Hallam argue that when reading creativity backwards in terms of innovation, "creativity lies outside time." (Ingold et al. 2007:10) When thinking about the terms 'industrial revolution' or 'digital revolution', innovations like the steam

engine and the computer are seen as the markers for these events, as outstanding achievements which changed the course of history. This is, in Ingold's terms, a 'metronomic' view on time, which follows a 'traditional view on tradition' (Ingold et al. 2007). If tradition is seen as a fixed set or system of codes and values, passed from one generation to another, the innovative moment, just as the computer or the steam engine, stands out of it, since it resists to fit in this system. Yet, in a forward reading of creativity, time is not 'metronomic', but 'rhythmic'. "This is a time, however, that is not marked out by the oscillations of a perfectly repeating system such as a clock or metronome, or by the revolutions of the planets, but one that is lived and felt in the pulsating rhymes of life itself." (Ingold et al. 2007:10) By reading creativity forwards, time goes along with improvisation, in a way of carrying on. In reference to Henri Bergson, Ingold describes this way of carrying on similar to growing older. By becoming mature, we are guided "by the past but not determined by it; heading into a future that is essentially unforeseeable. Only when we look back over the ground covered do we account our actions as the step-by-step realization of plans or prior intentions" (Ingold et al. 2007:11). In this sense, creativity does not lie outside time – "is not a faculty of the disembodied mind" (Ingold 2007:12) – but goes with time, in relation to it.

Creativity is relational, "because it goes on along 'ways of life' that are (...) entangled and mutually responsive" (Ingold et al. 2007:7). This means that creativity does not lie within an individual acting upon the world, but rather "lies in the dynamic potential of an entire field of relationships to bring forth the person situated in it" (Ingold et al. 2007:7). Combined with the temporal aspect of creativity, "people (...) not only grow but are also grown, in that they undergo histories of development and maturation within fields of relationships established through the presence and activities of others. Critically, this growth is not just one in strength or stature, but also in knowledge, in the work of imagination and the formation of ideas." (Ingold et al. 2007:8) Ingold gives the example of an pedestrian wayfarer. Every time the pedestrian returns to places he has already been to, they appear "a little different, enriched by the memories and experiences of your previous stay." (Ingold et al. 2007:8) The same goes with ideas. "Leading others along the same pathways, you may also share the idea with them, though again, as each brings along the particularities of their own experience, it will not be quite the same" (Ingold et al. 2007:8). In this sense, design is not something which is achieved by an individual thought – a god-like creation – but by a mind which "is a hotbed of tactical and relational improvisation" (Ingold et al. 2007:9).

For example, when I worked with the furniture store, I had just been finishing some notes concerning a customer's project, on a sunny day in summer, on which not many costumers visited the shop, when the door opened and Peter Hussl stepped in. Peter Hussl had taken over the workshop from his father, but broke with the production of conventional furniture his

father had outlined in favor for producing small series of chairs and tables created by designers.

"Hi Peter, how is it going? What brings you from Tyrol to Vienna?"

"Hello Stefan! Fine, and you? I thought I just pass by, because I had been at EOOS for the first prototype of a new chair I am going to produce."

Peter was proud that he had managed that the internationally recognized design studio EOOS would design a chair for his company. EOOS and Peter had met each other a couple of months ago, when he produced a series of tables for an exhibition at AUT (Architecture and Tirol) the studio participated in. Since Peter has his company far up in the mountains – which sometimes was leading to delays in delivery during winter, because trucks couldn't get to him to pick up the products – and EOOS was interested in Alpine furniture, especially in the multiple usage of simple benches along the wall (EOOS 2008), they decided to collaborate.

"Do you want to see it?" Peter asked. We went to his car where he carefully took out a one-to-one scale polystyrene model. "What do you think about it?" he asked. Although I liked it a lot, there was a detail which I personally didn't find convincing. So Peter and I started to discuss it. Eventually, he concluded our discussion: "Nevertheless I think we are on a good way, don't you? – we will see how it turns out."

Although the first prototype had little to do with what later would be called 'Alpine Series', this short episode exemplifies what Ingold and Hallam understand in reading creativity forwards – as improvisation. First, it shows that design is not a straight forward process, not a "step-by-step realization of plans or prior intentions" (Ingold et al. 2007:11), but rather a rhythmic process. When Peter Hussl said 'we will see how it turns out', this indicates that there was no prefigured plan which gave rise to a final form. Peter showed me the first prototype, a first draft which was still under construction, then unforeseeable how the 'Alpine' chair would look like. Second, it also shows the relational aspect of creativity. EOOS, interested in vernacular furniture, didn't just conceive an idea how a contemporary interpretation of an Alpine chair would look like, but rather used different sources of inspiration. Harald Gründl, one of the founders of EOOS, once explained that in finding inspiration for the 'Alpine Series' they visited a farm museum, where they were fascinated by the architectural design of the buildings (pers. reference). Also, giving a first prototype to Peter, who then showed it to me, discussing details, revisiting the prototype again, is similar to the example of the pedestrian wayfarer (Ingold et al. 2007), who revisits ideas he shared along the way with others and which may appear different every time he returns to them. Peter and I, discussing the chair's details, can be pictured as one of these 'others' on the path to the final product. All this is an entire field of

relationships – towards people and objects – leading to a dynamic potential which was used by the designers to generate the 'Alpine' chair's form.

Addressing the generative aspect of creativity, Ingold and Hallam think about an architectural designer – one "which is celebrated for his creativity" (Ingold 2007:3). They argue that his creative work ends at the drawing board, since it takes skilled builders and materials to create what the architect intended. "In order to accommodate the inflexible design to the realities of a fickle and inconstant world, builders have to improvise all the way." (Ingold et al. 2007:4) When the house's roof starts to leak and specialists have to step onto it, is an improvisation on the house itself. Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Fallingwater' building was known to the original owners as 'seven-bucket building', since buckets were used to catch the dips of water inside the house resulting from the constant leaking roof (Ingold 2013). Hence, fixing the roof is not tinkering with the architect's design, but rather maintaining the house for the purpose it was built – as it may be giving a shelter from rain. In dealing with design and innovation in more general terms, Ingold points out that "we are inclined to say that something is created when it is new, meaning not that it has been newly produced, but that it is the manifest outcome of a newly concocted plan" (Ingold et al. 2007:5) – a conception which carries strong similarities to the notion of 'disegno'. Yet, the generative aspect in improvisation, as Ingold puts it, is "not conditional upon judgements of the novelty or otherwise of the form it yields." (Ingold et al. 2007:3) Also imitation and copying are forms of the generative aspect of creativity, since "it is not the simple mechanical process of replication that it is often taken to be, of running off duplicates from a template, but entails a complex and ongoing alignment of observation. The formal resemblance between the copy and the model is an outcome of this process, not given in advance." (Ingold et al. 2007:5) Thus, imitation and copying are creative acts, too.

David Pye, a design theorist, distinguished between two kinds of workmanship: of risk and of certainty (Ingold et al. 2007). "The workmanship of certainty (...) proceeds by way of a pre-planned series of operations, each of which is mechanically constrained to the extent that the result is predetermined and outside the operative's control." (Ingold et al. 2007:13) So, the pure form of this kind of workmanship would be fully automatized, similar to a copying machine. However, in the workmanship of risk "the quality of the outcome depends at every moment on the exercise of care, judgement and dexterity. The practitioner has continually to make fine adjustments to keep his course" (Ingold et al. 2007:13). When creativity is pictured in a backward reading, it comes closer to 'workmanship of certainty', where a prefigured plan is mechanically followed to achieve innovation. Yet, in a forward reading, for Ingold, creativity is a 'workmanship of risk' – an improvisation that "makes the most of the multiple possibilities they afford for keeping life going." (Ingold et al. 2007:15) In a very general sense he argues that "improvisation is the way we work" (Ingold et al. 2007:12) – craftsmen and everyone else,

including designers. Their work is not the outcome of a divine principle, an innovation imposed into the world, but rather an improvisation which keeps life going on.

3.2.5. CONCLUSION

Who designs, if "improvisation is the way we work" (Ingold et al. 2007:12)? Enzo Manzini (2015) suggested to picture 'expert design', practiced by professionals, distinct from 'diffusive design' performed by everyone. Although Ingold and Hallam's approach to creativity is very general, it does not stand in contradiction to Manzini's distinction. Their conception shows that creativity is not a divine principle of inventiveness, as the notion 'disegno' implied – achieving outstanding disjunctures – but creativity should be understood as improvisation. By picturing, for instance, a designer who is creating a computer interface, this designer is not 'standing outside time' (Ingold et al. 2007) in her creation of something new, but "makes the most of the multiple possibilities" (Ingold et al. 2007:15) to create her product. Even if the user is able to adjust and change the interface to his own needs, the user is not a designer, although both of them improvise. The designer creates her interface as an improvisation within a certain set of technological and algorithmic possibilities, and by doing so she gives the user the possibility to improvise to a certain level with the interface. While Drazin sees improvisation of users already as design – design as a 'popular public activity' (Drazin 2012) – for Manzini, these improvisations are the starting points for expert designers for triggering new design initiatives (Manzini 2015).

Another example would be the 'Do Create' series the company 'droog' launched at the beginning of the century. As part of this series, the designer Marijn van der Poll created the 'Do Hit' chair. This product is actually not a chair, in the sense that it has four legs, a seat- and backrest, but a metal cube that comes with a sledgehammer. The designer intended that the consumer of this product can create a chair according to her own needs by hitting it hard with the hammer. Droog's aim of the 'Do Create' project was to invite consumers "to interact and play, and thereby influence the design." (<http://studio.droog.com/studio/all/do-create/>) So, if somebody bangs a chair out of the metal cube, this clearly is an improvisation within a specific framework – an interaction which influences the chair's design. But, what happens, if somebody beats another sculpture out of the metal cube, a table, for instance? Would that still be an influence on the design, or actually a creation of something different – a 'Do Hit' table?

3.3. THE MATTER OF FORM

Examples as the 'Do Create' series by 'droog' show that the distinction between users and designers underwent a critical refection within the practical as well as the theoretical conception of design practices – especially through 'participatory design' processes, where the 'user' is involved in the design process. More precisely, as Johan Redström puts it, "this approach addressed the question of who can be included in the process of design and with what influence and power" (Redström 2012:84). Discussions led towards the conception of 'lead users', who, through experimentation, come up with new ideas and innovations to products. For example, "new ways of riding (big) waves led surfers to develop things such as the foot strap" (Redström 2012:84). Yet, this conception "suggests, there is still a distinction made between design and use." (Redström 2012:84) This means that the invention of products as the foot strap is restricted to professional designers – consumers are those who use them in the way they are intended. In this sense, it appears to be important to look for a relational understanding of designing and using (Redström 2012). Neologisms like the 'prosumer' (Toffler 1984) – combining the words producer and consumer – might already indicate such a relational understanding, especially in the contexts of the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) movement and participatory design. Alvin Toffler (1984) described how borders between users and producers become increasingly blurred, especially by the use of new information technologies, namely the computer and the internet. (see Drazin 2012)

With a more general approach, Wendy Gunn argues to move away from a problem-orientated approach towards designing, "away from the standard trajectory of one situated context of use, one problem, and how to solve this" (Gunn et al. 2012:1), by "building closer relations between using and producing, designing and using, people and things" (Gunn et al. 2012:1). Gunn is neither arguing for the user as designer, or for the householder as designer, but is rather critically examining the notion of 'end-users' – those for whom problems have to be solved – in the design process. By moving away from such a problem oriented approach, she seeks "to reframe relations between the designer and user, researcher and designer, company and customer, and offers people already involved in practice(s) different ways of understanding what they know and do." (Gunn et al. 2012:7) Redström offers a way of reconsidering these binary oppositions: he argues that the oppositional pair of using and designing has something to do with how we perceive objects (Redström 2012, 2008).

3.3.1. THE CONCEPT OF THE USER-PRODUCER

Relying on Jonathan Hill and his fundamental critique about architecture, which states that "the major currency in contemporary architecture is the image, the photograph, not the

building" (Hill 1998:137), Johan Redström highlights this aspect for the theoretical conception of designed objects. Taking the Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe as an example, Hill pointed out that this "icon of twentieth century architecture" (Hill 1998:139) hadn't become one by its sheer existence and by being used or occupied, "but precisely because it existed as a photograph and could not be occupied" (Hill 1998:139) – this is because it simply didn't exist as a built form between 1939 and 1986. "Ironically, an architect's experience of architecture is more akin to the contemplation of the art object than the occupation of a building. Unfortunately, architects often choose to ignore this simple distinction. For architects, the classification of architecture as an art is a social and financial necessity" (Hill 1998:144). And for these reasons architects are interested primarily in the form of their buildings, functioning as static objects. Here, Redström raises an important issue for the field of Design Anthropology. This emerging field "with deep concerns for form and practices that its very name traces the history of, faces a certain difficulty if the notion of form in its emerging discourse is left unaltered as it is imported from art history." (Redström 2012:95) In other words, the question is how to address the architect's product without looking at the use of the building. But, when dealing with design, one can't leave behind the designed object, just because "we cannot weave practices unfolding over time into our notion of form." (Redström 2012:95) The problem is, if the building was perceived as a static thing, the discussion would enter "material culture studies where the world seems to be filled with things and the central issue thus becomes the question of what people then do with them; or as when the everyday practices of altering, appropriation, etc., must be accounted as exceptions, as deviations, rather than as part of what in fact was set into motion by the design process." (Redström 2012:95–96)

To exemplify this point, let me continue with architecture as 'designed object'. Indeed, some architectural theorists, as Robert Gassner, try to overcome the picture of buildings as static things by arguing that they are agents in biographies of their inhabitants (Gassner 2009). Gassner, who was analyzing the 'House at Ådalsvej' in Vanløse, Denmark, designed by the architect Edvard Heiberg for himself and his family, tried to trace "this processual nature of the house into particular biographical situations." (Gassner 2009:120) The 'House at Ådalsvej' clearly follows the political beliefs of Heiberg, who "advocated the introduction of a socialist system in Scandinavia as well as the advancement of communal forms of living" (Gassner 2009:124). His idea of new types of dwelling favored the reduction of activities within the nuclear family and promoted dwelling as "an increased engagement of its members in a larger community" (Gassner 2009:124). The design of the 'House at Ådalsvej' clearly reflected his ideas by having a "large common space including a kitchen and living areas, which are connected by an internal window, and cell-like bedrooms for the family members." (Gassner

2009:124) The spatial organization also included a very narrow kitchen and a tiny door from the kitchen to the outside, indicating Heiberg's idea that in a socialist Scandinavia cooking would be a collective task. Gasser describes how the inhabitants were tinkering with the interior of the house. Edvard Heiberg's wife Ellen Margareta, for instance, "installed a large dark curtain on 'her side' of the full-height interior window between the living room and kitchen (...) to establish a temporary state of privacy (...). As she did not share her husband's political views, she did 'not want to be part' of the clandestine wartime gatherings of the Danish Communist Party, which took place around the table in the family's living room, immediately adjacent to the internal window." (Gassner 2009:131) Various other changes in the house's layout have been made over the time, like the kitchen that found its new home in the basement as a storage unit, since it "never had been good for any serious kitchen work to be carried out on it. It had simply been too narrow. But now, it makes the perfect base for the new storage furniture, together with the original wall-hanging cabinet." (Gassner 2009:133)

Gasser's argument is that these examples are "tracing this processual nature of the house into particular biographical situations" (Gassner 2009:121). And "doing so would help critical understandings of the design phases vis-à-vis the prospective life expectancy of the produced material, of the validity and erosion of design decisions" (Gassner 2009:136). Indeed, the 'processual nature' which Gassner points out, comes very close to Redström's concern about what was set in motion by the design process. Yet, Gassner pictures the 'House at Ådalsvej' as an agent in Alfred Gell's sense (see chapter 2.2.; Gassner 2009); as an agent of which the architect's intentions could be 'abducted' from. Hence, for Gassner, the house carries the architect Edvard Heiberg's agency. The 'processual nature' of the house then occurs to be a kind of (creative) appropriation of the architect's design. Or, put in other words: how the inhabitants of the 'House at Ådalsvej' were dealing with the 'designed object' (Drazin 2009), and how these processes look like. Therefore, Gassner's study clearly follows material culture studies. Redström, on the other hand, observes that "we still struggle with articulation of relations between design and use that differ significantly from an understanding that first designers design, then users use" (Redström 2012:83). When Gassner pointed out that the 'designed object' – the house in his case – has a processual nature, by showing how it underwent various transformations by its inhabitants, he actually described how they tinker with the design. The emphasis here lies on the 'designed object' and how users are dealing with it.

Tim Ingold, in his conception of the 'user-cum-producer', offers another way to the relational understanding of design and use. With the 'user-cum-producer' Ingold argues that objects, like architectural buildings, are "not imposed upon matter but arise through the engagement of forces and materials within an ongoing process of life" (Ingold 2012:29). His starting point is a

breakfast table. "You are seated on a chair, before a table, which is covered with a cloth. On the cloth, more or less under your nose, is placed a bowl, and to the right of the bowl, a spoon. A little further away, a jug contains milk, and a cardboard box contains your favorite cereal. You pick up the box to pour some cereal into the bowl." (Ingold 2012:19) The action which follows could enter in a complete mess; filling in the right amount of cereal into the bowl, adding milk without dripping any drop onto the cloth, picking up the spoon and bringing it level the mouth without spillage might be hard being in a hurry or having a hangover. In this sense, the breakfast table could be seen as nothing else than an obstacle course. A course in which "every novel object of design sets an obstacle in our path" (Ingold 2012:32). Since all these objects can be seen as artifacts, produced and designed by someone with foresight, one has to deal with them as alienated objects (Miller 1998). But Ingold not at all sees the breakfast table as an obstacle course, for he is relying on Martin Heidegger's differentiation between objects just open for attentive looking and objects in use (1971). "The object complete in itself shuts us out, presenting only its outward surfaces to our inspection. But the thing draws us in to the very movements of its formation." (Ingold 2012:30) All the objects on the kitchen table are in this sense not encountered as objects, but as things. Going back to Heidegger, he gives the example of a jug. A jug is a thing, different from an artifact. Although it is designed and produced by someone, which makes it per definition an artifact, it is in use and is therefore a thing. It is not its image or the intention of the producer that matters in being a thing, but its thingness. The notion 'thingness' does not refer to the function of something, but, in the Heideggerian sense, refers to the use. So, things are things because they are in use, like the spoon, the bowl or whatever on the breakfast table. According to Ingold, all these things on the breakfast table "are not finished but are carried on in their use even as you carry on with your life as you sit down to eat" (Ingold 2012:30) – they are 'grown', as Ingold (2000, 2013) would put it. The notion of the user-cum-producer in Ingold's sense implies that "during the processes and practices of enactment people become skilled practitioners" (Gunn 2012:2). We become skilled not only in preparing our breakfast but also skilled in using our smart phones, computer interfaces, cars and whatever designed objects there maybe. People lay down the foundations for the next thing to happen, just as they judge that there is enough milk in regard to the cereal in their bowl. By doing so, people are not merely consumers of cereal and milk, but are also producers of their breakfast – they are constantly producing the foundations for the next thing to happen.

The conception of the user-cum-producer challenges the separation between production and consumption. It also replaces the idea of the passive consumer by arguing that the making of objects is never finished and never fixed. Different to material culture studies where meaningful relations are made through use, an object here is not first designed and produced

and – afterwards – used. Even if material culture studies have shown that the everyday use of objects might be far away from what designers had originally intended, by doing so they have increased the division between users on the one side and designers on the other – entering the thought that first designers design, producers produce, and then users use. In this sense, Ingold's critique is that "so-called material culture have focused overwhelmingly on processes of consumption rather than production" (Ingold 2011:26). Consumption studies have shown in detail that objects are not simply imposed onto societies, emphasizing the users' perspective. For Ingold, however, it is the perspective that matters – the perspective itself has to be problematized.

3.3.2. THE BERLIN TABLE

I felt quite uneasy when I was sitting in Franz' flat; I had come from Stockholm the night before and I wasn't really in fieldwork mode yet. Then, his key turned in the lock – panic, what should I do? Should I get up from the table and greet him? Should I stay at the table where I was sitting? But how could I observe then? – I would miss something about how he interacts with his furniture.

"Hi", Franz said, took off his shoes and hung his coat to the coat-racks, "how was your day?" Without awaiting my answer he went to his kitchen and turned on the indirect lights, which made the glossy white of the drawers and cupboards shine against the dark wooden floor. Impressed by this scenery I just saw Franz turning left towards his bedroom. »I wasn't doing much today,« I replied while following him. »How was your day at work?« Franz took off his jacket and hung it into his huge cabinet with its sliding doors. The cabinet was packed with suits and shirts, all in perfect order, all of them perfectly ironed, and not a single piece inside which didn't seem to belong here. I hoped that at least inside one of the drawers a glimpse of messiness would be hidden in this perfectly clean and well ordered flat.

"Good," he said, opened another button of his shirt, and escaped again from me. I started wondering, if he was feeling a bit uneasy with me following him into his bedroom, waiting for an answer to my question instead of leaving him alone.

Within this setting, I was following Tim Ingold's argument of 'correspondence'. Ingold borrows this term from Alfred Schütz (1951), who argued that when musicians play together, they are not interacting, "but (...) rather moving along together (...) at every moment sharing in each other 'vivid presence'" (Ingold 2013:106). Although Ingold uses correspondence in a different context¹⁸, I would argue that it is also inherent to ethnography – when it comes to

¹⁸ A point I shall go into detail later on, when it comes to the methodological implications of Design Anthropology.

observing what people do when they dwell. In the same vain as Ingold prefers walking abreast along the street to "direct face to face interaction," because when walking abreast people share "virtually the same visual field" (Ingold 2013:106). Similarly, I came home with Franz – although I had already been there –, I followed him while he was doing things, sharing that with him. He turned the key in the lock, he interacted with his things, along with me. He made me stunned about his kitchen being in a pure photo shooting condition the moment he switched on the lights – a neat and perfect light installation. I don't think that Franz did this on purpose because I was there – for this I had known him and his flat for far too long. The kitchen was always lit like this. Even when I was visiting him for having dinner together or for drinking some wine, the kitchen presented itself in this state. It seemed to be a habit to turn on the indirect lights instead of the the ceiling light, giving the kitchen that much of a showroom style look. It is exactly this kind of activities I am interested in. My intention has shifted not to ask people about certain kinds of objects, but rather about how they interact with them, how they dwell with them, or in other words what they do when they dwell.

I found Franz in the kitchen. A wine stack was hidden in one of the drawers from where he fetched a bottle of red wine – a very good one, as I would find out later. He opened it up and took a glass out of a cupboard. All the glasses were standing in a straight line; all the cups with a perfect angle to each other. He took out another glass, raising his eyebrows asking silently if I wanted one, too. He took the two glasses and the bottle, and went to the solid wood dining table in the living room. I had seen earlier that this table was very thinly oiled.

I recognized that immediately, since I had learned at the furniture shop where I did participant observation that oiled wooden tables would catch patina when they are used. This fact about catching patina was praised as a material quality, giving the table an individual character over time. Customers being worried about spending much money on a table which would get marks of usage after a while, the sales assistants would tell that clearly painted wooden tables should be the product of choice. Hence, a clearly painted wooden table would represent a person who wants furniture be neat. Or, to put it in other words, the oiled wooden table would stand for a person who doesn't care about spots and marks on a table. I wondered what such a table was doing in a neat flat like Franz'.

I was quite astonished that his table didn't have any marks on it at all, although it must had been three years old at least – was Franz not using it? Obviously he did, he filled one glass up and put the bottle on the table before he went over to his sofa.

"This is my wooden table," recognizing me staring at the table. "I ordered it especially thinly oiled."

"Why that?" I replied, still puzzled about the spotless solid wood.

"You know, when I was living in Berlin, there was this oiled wooden table in the kitchen of our flat. You could clearly see that it had been there for ages, and probably still is now. All the marks people had left there over time, from cutting out something to drawings – you were able to see all these marks on the table. That fascinated me. I had really a good time there in this flat... That's why I decided to get a solid wooden table, too. I was sitting at the table in Berlin for hours and hours looking at it, seeing how the table would receive new shapes by simply focusing on another mark on it... It was a hard day today. Do you mind, if I rest a bit on the sofa before I prepare us something to eat?" Franz opened up his MacBook and took a sip of wine. "If you want a glass, please help yourself." The sofa he lay on was a straight forward looking piece of furniture. On a polished stainless steel substructure a grey covered seat and back-surface with pentagonal armrests were resting, making it more comfortable to stretch out on the seat. No pillows were lying around.

We sat at his table and had some bread, olives and prosciutto a while later. Drinking wine, I imagined Franz in Berlin in the flat with the aged wooden table. After chatting about politics and other stuff, Franz removed the dishes from the table and cleaned it carefully. No trace of our meal, the wine and our conversation was left on the table – like no other trace did ever before.

On the one hand, this episode could be interpreted following an objectification perspective as I have discussed in the previous chapter, by focusing on the relationship of things with human culture or society – "things as an integral part of being human and living together with others." (Tilley 2006b:4). The table objectifies his memories, the materiality of his relation to Berlin. On the other hand, his neat wooden table makes Franz – in the sense of becoming himself, just as his perfectly ordered chests or his showroom-like kitchen. By following this 'user perspective', one might argue with Miller (2011) and picture Franz as a householder analogous to a designer. Yet, in Ingold's conception of the user-producer (2012), this episode is not so much concerned with Franz' memories of Berlin – how he consumes his table (Strathern 1992) – but takes a closer look at what he is actually doing with his table, setting Franz' actions at the forefront. When Ingold refers to the Heideggerian division of objects and things, Franz' table could also be seen as a thing, simply because it is in use. Like the things on Ingold's breakfast table which are carried on through their use, the same is true for Franz' table. Usually, as I have learned in the shop I worked with, you clean such a table once in a while and oil it from time to time so it catches up the patina Franz was talking about. Yet, Franz was very carefully cleaning, almost sanding down his table. This is a form of actively engaging with the material, different from simply using or creatively appropriating it. When thinking about Drazin's conception of design, which takes its leverage by the realization of something new within a materialist trajectory (Drazin 2009), one could be tempted to argue

that Franz is the designer of his table. Yet, within the concept of the user-cum-producer Ingold has a different view, connected to form itself. Similar to Ingold's breakfast table (2012) with the bowl of cereals, the milk and the spoon on it, where the skilled practitioner judges about the right amount of milk in the bowl, and manages to get to eat the breakfast without producing a complete mess, Franz is also skilled in cleaning his solid wood table. By using the right tools and cleaning it in a way that the whole surface looks like brand new afterwards. By doing so, he is not producing a table or some kind of sur- or inter-face – rather, he produces the foundations for the next thing to happen. In Franz' case this would be another meal, another shared bottle of wine on the table, which he incorporates so perfectly into his flat – to the perfectly ordered chests, the neat illuminated kitchen, and so on. He even lays the foundation that the table might be catching up some patina – like the one he had in Berlin. In this sense, the table is not a 'designed object' (Drazin 2009), which is designed first and then used. It is not imposed onto the world by a designer who decided for straight lines combined with an oiled surface that catches up patina and, then, is appropriated by Franz in making a connection to his time in Berlin. Neither, Franz is designing a table "by which an idea, already framed within the imagination, is realised in a material substrate pre-prepared to receive it." (Ingold 2011:177) Obviously, the idea of the Berlin table in his imagination is quite controversial to his action of cleaning. The table, like any other things in the conception of the user-producer, is not finished, but carried on by use (Ingold 2012) – using in the sense of interrogating with (designed) materials. Therefore, the designed object – the form – is not static at all, but always in a constant process of making – just as cleaning, or carefully sanding down a table, like in Franz' case. For Ingold, this kind of making is close to growing. He argues that "the idea of growing might be extended (...) to the inanimate. What we call 'things', too, are grown. In practice, there is more to the manufacture of artifacts than the mechanical transcription of a design or plan" (Ingold 2000:86–87). This leads to the understanding that any 'designed object' is not a materialization of a symbolic thought, rather, its form is relational: being a relation between design and use.

3.3.3. ON GROWING OBJECTS

The path to Tim Ingold's thinking of growing the inanimate requires an incorporation of his earlier publications. With his major collection of essays titled *The Perception of Environment* (Ingold 2000), Ingold laid out the context by which one has to understand his following contributions. Concerned with 'schisms' which shape the distinction between the two ways of anthropology, socio-cultural one the one hand, and scientific on the the other hand, he tries to diminish the gap between understanding humans in socio-cultural and in biophysical terms.

Relying on Gibson's ecological psychology and Heidegger's phenomenology, he takes his point of departure seeing an "organism-in-its-environment, as opposed to the self-contained individual confronting a world 'out there'." (Ingold 2000:4) This brings him to the "conception of the human being not as a composite entity made up of separable but complementary parts, such as body, mind and culture, but rather as a singular locus of creative growth within a continually unfolding field of relationships." (Ingold 2000:4–5) Against the background of this holistic understanding, Ingold is concerned with how human beings relate to their environment, and raises questions in how far activities are rooted in the engagements between people and their environment. Challenging the view that humans act upon, interfere with, or do things to nature, and thereby understanding nature as an externally existing outside of socially constituted selves, he states that "if human beings, on the one hand and plants and animals on the other can be regarded alternately as components of each others' environments, then we can no longer think of humans as inhabiting a social world of their own, over and above the world of nature in which the lives of all other living things are contained." (Ingold 2000:87)

This point can be made by simply looking at a pot plant, for example. Let's think of a pot plant in a room. According to the division between humans and nature, this pot plant belongs to nature, because it does not inhabit a social world. But since the pot plant belongs to a room a person dwells in, it is as much part of the environment of the room as is the human being who occupies it. The plant in the pot needs the human being to survive; someone who waters it and takes care of it. For this reason the human being and the plant are components of each other's environment, without any distinction between these two. This is a very reduced example for Ingold's argument, because he takes his point on the 'organism-in-its-environment' as an outset to move into the direction of growing. Ingold takes an example from Marilyn Strathern's Mount Hageners in Papua New Guinea. Their world *mbo* is used for the activity of planting (Strathern 1980). It refers, to some extent, to "any (...) point of growth within the general field of human relations: thus a breeding pig can be *mbo* in respect of the herd it will engender, and people can be *mbo* in respect of their placement in clan territory." (Ingold 2000:83) The antithesis *romi* refers to whatever "lies outside the limits of human care and sociability." (Ingold 2000:83) What at a first glance appears like a division between 'domestic' as culturalized and 'wild' as naturalized, is actually not. Such a division is completely absent in the Mount Hageners' conception of the world. In the action of planting, "one does not transform nature, in the sense of imposing a rational order upon a given materiality. Rather, one places a cutting in the ground so that it may take root and grow." (Ingold 2000:83) The Mount Hageners also use the term *mbo* for raising children, in the sense that also children grow into maturity, like plants grow into the social environment. This

society does not impose a social order upon nature, rather, the Mount Hageners "constitute, as inherently social, the very environment within which their plants and animals come into being, take root and grow to maturity." (Ingold 2000:83)

In the case of the Mount Hageners, Strathern points out that children, for example, "are grown, rather trained into" (Ingold 2000:86) social maturity, while in "the tradition of Western thought, the idea of making – understood as the inscription of conceptual form upon material substance – has been extended from the manufacture of artifacts to the breeding of plants and animals" (Ingold 2000:87). If we think of the pot plant once again, this point might become clear. A pot flower is not any kind of flower one can pick during spring time. Its conceptual form can be described as decoration item for the rooms we dwell in. By watering it, picking dried leaves, putting it at sunny places, one could argue that we do make this plant, since there is no plant in nature which is actually growing in a pot. The plant in this terms is the raw material to serve our needs. Ingold goes even further and argues that making "has even been extended to the raising of children – insofar as this is regarded as a process of socialization whereby approved norms and values are superimposed upon the raw material of new-born human infants." (Ingold 2000:87)

Therefore, the contradiction Ingold observes lies between the notions of making and growing. With "a simple switch of perspective" (Ingold 2000:87), he argues that making in itself is a form of growing. "We are accustomed to think of making as a project. This is to start with an idea in mind, of what we want to achieve, and with a supply of the raw material needed to achieve it. And it is to finish at the moment when the material has taken on the intended form." (Ingold 2013:20) According to Ingold, this is the 'standard view', in which "the form pre-exists in the maker's mind, and is simply impressed upon the material" (Ingold 2000:342). In this sense, "human beings (...) are the authors of their own designs, constructed through a self-conscious decision process (...). The essence of making lies in the self-conscious authorship of design" (Ingold 2000:175). This is illustrated by what Ingold calls 'building perspective'. Being concerned with architectural form, Ingold compares a house to a shell and a beavers lodge. Within this perspective the shell simply grows into its form, while the beaver puts effort into his construction just as man does and therefore makes its 'animal architecture'. The difference between the lodge and the house, could be argued, does not lie "in the construction of the thing itself, but in the origination of the design that governs the construction process." (Ingold 2000:175) The origination has, of course, to be a mental process; an idea in mind, some image of it, "constructed in the imagination prior to their realisation in the material" (Ingold 2000:175). Ingold provides us with an example: "suppose you need to knock in a nail but lack a hammer." (Ingold 2000:175) By looking around we will define what best suits the purpose – something hard with a flat surface which holds nicely in

our hand – and we will find an appropriate stone. The stone now became a hammer, because we saw in it hammer-like qualities. When talking about architecture among hunter and gatherer societies, a similar view can be found: their "building activity is part and parcel of life in an environment that is already given in nature, and that has not itself been artificially engineered." (Ingold 2000:180) Like the example of the stone with hammer-like qualities, both have not been artificially made, but, they have been what Ingold calls 'co-opted' – "we press into service what we find around us to suit our current purposes, we proceed to modify those things to our own design so that they better serve these purposes" (Ingold 2000:176). In opposition to 'co-option' stands the construction perspective. In terms of architecture this would be a village, where "nature has to a degree been covered over or transformed, so that what immediately confronts people is not a natural environment but (...) an environment of their own making" (Ingold 2000:180) – a cultural environment, so to speak. Yet, both views on architecture – co-option and the construction perspective – belong to the building perspective, since "either way, the environment is given in advance, as a kind of container for life to occupy." (Ingold 2000:180) Within hunter and gatherer societies it is the natural environment, which is already given and co-opted to their needs. In villages it is the built environment which follows the same logic in terms of an "architect's perspective: first plan and build the houses, then import the people to occupy them" (Ingold 2000:180).

This kind of 'architect's perspective' in Ingold's argument is equal to the problem addressed by Redström – "that first designers design, then users use" (Redström 2012:83). Ingold, however, aims to switch the perspective to what he calls 'dwelling perspective', by heavily relying on Heidegger and his idea that building is already dwelling. Heidegger stated that "we do not dwell because we have built, but we built and have built because we dwell" (Heidegger 1993:350). For Ingold, this means "that the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings." (Ingold 2000:186) Building in this sense is relational to the environment one already lives in. The beaver, to stick to Ingold's initial example, "inhabits an environment that has been decisively modified by the labours of its forbears, in building dams and lodges, and will in turn contribute to the fashioning of an environment for its progeny." (Ingold 2000:186) The beaver does not construct lodges in the sense of a building perspective, but because it was born and lives in an environment where beavers build dams and lodges, it will continue to do so. "The same goes for human beings. Human children, like the young of many other species, grow up in environments furnished by the work of previous generations, and as they do so they come literally to carry the forms of their dwelling in their bodies." (Ingold 2000:186) Going back to Strathern's example of the Mount Hageners, whose children are not trained into society but are grown, the picture

becomes clear. Whereas the 'building perspective' would cover the notion of being trained, or, rather, made, leading to a mature member of a society as the final product, the character of Ingold's 'dwelling perspective' lies in the process of continually going on. Growing into society and its norms and values; growing into practical engagements of one's surroundings.

With this switch of perspective, let us imagine – as Ingold starts most of his examples – a coiled basket to see how objects are grown. "The basket is not 'made' in the sense in which we normally understand the term. Nor, evidently, has it grown on its own accord. (...) Let us start instead from the simple observation that constructing a basket is a process of weaving." (Ingold 2000:341) The basket maker may begin his work with a pretty clear idea. "The actual, concrete form of the basket, however, does not issue from the idea. It rather comes into being through gradual unfolding of that field of forces set through the active and sensuous engagement of practitioner and material." (Ingold 2000:342) Ingold's point is easier to get, if we think of a carpenter instead. Let's assume a carpenter has an idea for a solid wood table, just as the one Franz has in his flat. Though, the actual table is not executed by the idea itself: the form of a table, where the knotholes are, and how the wood grain looks, are not issued by the idea, but rather form an engagement of the carpenter with the material in the process of making the table. The point of departure for Ingold is not the artifact and from where it evolves, but is the carpenter – the practitioner herself in her action of making. "This is to place the maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials. These materials are what he has to work with, and in the process of making he 'joins forces' with them, bringing them together or splitting them apart, synthesizing and distilling, in anticipation of what might emerge." (Ingold 2013:21) With her 'skilled movement', she is not crafting out of a wooden raw material, but *weaves* together materials in a field of forces. This "does not merely involve the mechanical application of external force but calls for care, judgement and dexterity." (Ingold 2000:347) This care, judgement and dexterity require skills. With skills Ingold does "not mean techniques of the body, but the capabilities of action and perception of the whole organic being situated in a richly structured environment. (...) Skills are not transmitted from generation to generation but are regrown in each, incorporated into the *modus operandi* of the developing human organism through training and experience in the performance of particular tasks." (Ingold 2000:5) This performing of particular tasks, therefore, for Ingold is a skilled movement, which has "a narrative quality, in the sense that every movement, like every line in a story, grows rhythmically out of the one before and lays the groundwork for the next." (Ingold 2000:347) Therefore, making in terms of growing can be seen as a combination of three elements: an operation in a field of forces by an engagement with the material, a kind of work that requires additional skills like judgement and care, and a rhythmical growth that lays the foundation for the next move to happen. "The

form of the basket is the result of a play of forces, both internal and external to the material that makes it up. One could say that the form unfolds within a kind of force field, in which the weaver is caught up in a reciprocal and quite muscular dialogue with the material." (Ingold 2000:342) In this sense, "making is less a matter of projection than one of gathering, more analogous, perhaps, to sewing or weaving" (Ingold 2011:178) – as the example of the basket maker should indicate.

For Ingold, objects are not woven or sewed together, but, they are grown. He borrows the notion growth from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (2004). In their phenomenological tradition they argue for a 'line of becoming'. "A line of becoming is not defined by the points it connects (...) a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end" (Deleuze 2004:323). The example they use is a river running, as usual, between two banks. These are connected by a bridge, which one can cross to get from one side to the other. Thus, the bridge is pictured as a transitive connection between the two banks. The river itself does not connect two specific points, rather, it just flows. For Ingold, the transitive point-to-point connector "takes us from a starting point, such as an image of what is to be made, to an end point in the form of the completed object, or vice versa, from the ready-made object to a final image in the mind of a spectator or consumer." (Ingold 2011:14) The line of becoming, though, is intransitive – it just flows, like the river in Deleuze's example, relational to both sides of the river. This means the growth of something (in)animated has no beginning and no end, rather, it implies what Ingold already describes with his 'dwelling perspective' (Ingold 2000). Hence, the position of the practitioner in his skilled movements is not the builder of a bridge across the river. Rather, "the most he can do is to intervene in worldly processes that are already going on, and which give rise to the forms of the living world that we see all around us – in plants and animals, in waves of water, snow and sand, in rocks and clouds – adding his own impetus to the forces and energies in play" (Ingold 2013:21). By looking closer at Ingold's outset to diminish the gap between humans and nature, he admits that "there is a difference between bending material into shape, as in basketry, and an organism's growing into it (...) Nevertheless, if the unfolding of the morphogenetic field is described as a process of growth, would it not be fair to suggest that there is a sense in which artifacts, whose forms likewise evolve within a field of forces, 'grow' too – albeit according to different principles?" (Ingold 2000:345). Ingold's answer lies in the notion of autopoiesis – a "self-transformation over time of the system of relations within which an organism or artifact comes into being." (Ingold 2000:345) By including the matter of time into his concept of making, Ingold argues that the activity of making "does not transform that system but is – like the growth of plants and animals – part and parcel of the system's transformation of itself. Through this autopoietic process, the temporal rhythms of life are gradually built into the structural properties of things" (Ingold

2000:345). In this sense, things are grown by skilled movements rather than built with foresight.

Let me go back to the example of Franz' Berlin Table to show how the notion of form changes within Ingold's perspective. I have argued that Franz is best understood as user-producer (Ingold 2012), who is producing his table by using it, which includes cleaning it afterwards. However, within the 'building perspective', producing is not seen in the way that Franz is actually constructing his table. By looking closely at the material change, seen as a feature of design practice (Drazin 2009) – when Franz is cleaning his table, or, rather, sanding it down, Ingold is interested in putting the practitioner at the forefront. It is not so much the result that matters for Ingold, but the practitioner himself – the actions he is involved in. So, what happens in Franz' actions? As I have learned in the shop I worked with, oil is used as a finisher. Raw wood has the tendency to soak up liquids. Depending on the liquid, this can leave spots behind. To avoid that, surfaces are either painted or oiled. When painted, the surface is protected, and no liquid can be soaked up by the wood; when oiled, the wood is forced to soak up the oil until it cannot soak up any more of it. The oil remains in the material and protects the wood from soaking up any other liquids. Thus, a thinly oiled table has a wooden surface which only had to soak up a little bit of oil and is therefore still capable to soak up other liquids. So, Franz is working here within the field of forces (Ingold 2000) – he is engaged with the material and is, in this sense, a skilled practitioner, "whose skill lies in (...) [his] ability to find the grain of the world's becoming and to follow its course while bending it to (...) [his] evolving purpose." (Ingold 2011:216) It is not that Franz learned so much about the specific qualities of wood – I have to confess I never told him that he is actually sanding down his table the way how he cleans it, and, therefore, the table is catching up some patina even faster. But in here lies what Ingold understands with 'laying the foundations for the next thing to happen'. It is not a plan that Franz follows what to do next, like getting from one point to another via a Deleuzian bridge, having an result in the end – a spotless table or a table with patina. Within Ingold's view, Franz is rather trapped in the flow, as an organism-in-environment, by growing his table. He is dwelling, practically engaging with his surroundings, rather than building a Berlin Table. I argue here that these surroundings don't have to be 'natural' per se. When Ingold argues that growing can be applied to the inanimate (Ingold 2000), surroundings can be both animated as inanimate – like pot plants, furniture and all kinds of other stuff we find in our flats.

3.3.4. CONCLUSION

The notion of form is thus a slippery one. Tables, houses, anything else is in a constant process of making. Ingold's concept of the user-producer might strongly remind of Toffler's neologism of the 'prosumer', binding together the user and the producer of (digital) products. As Redström points out, it was "digital technology that brought more relational forms and unfolding relations back to design, as in examples such as open source software and designs that can be continuously re-designed and altered, e.g. through software updates and end-user customization of functionality and appearance" (Redström 2012:94-5). In this respect Gunn finds in Ingold's concept of the user-producer a "way to using and designing as a process of carrying on whereby things are not actually finished." (Gunn 2012:5) Ingold, in his concept of the user-producer, does not describe how the actual form of a spoon or whatever is on his breakfast table, is created. His argument could be put more into the direction of Wittgenstein's language games¹⁹, to the respect that the form is mediated by it's use – by growing objects. Thinking about Franz' table which, let's say, alters with its surface; this is a way of producing, but Franz' actions are not doing anything to the form itself. Similar the example Redström gives elsewhere. He is "using this laptop computer to write this text in a way most likely intended by its designers – but a few weeks ago (...) [he] used it as a lamp to light up a room during a power outage." (Redström 2008:418) Let's take this example further by assuming that Redström lives in a region with a constant lack in power supply. Since he needs light, the use of his computer is closer to that of a lamp than that of a text writing machine. Here, we enter the discussion on *Thinking Through Things* (Henare et al. 2007) – I have already addressed in the previous chapter (see 2.6.) – which suggests to encounter things as they appear ethnographically, in the everyday lifeworlds of people. Should the computer be encountered as text writing device or as lamp? This is what Ingold addresses with his thinking about growing things. Things are constantly made, not by foresight, but grown relational to their environment – grown in relation to a power outage as in Redström's (2008) example, and grown like the Berlin Table in relation to perfectly folded shirts. Yet, these are not the causes, the starting or end points, but the environments which are therefore "never complete but are continually under construction." (Ingold 2000:172)

¹⁹ Wittgenstein argued that limits of language are limits of the world, and therefore the reality is a linguistic construction. Since language is defined by its use, its use ultimately shapes reality.

3.4. ON DESIGNING

By moving away from a problem-oriented approach of design, where first designers design and then users use, Ingold offered a way where one is dealing with objects which are in use – pictured in the Heideggerian notion of things – and therefore seen in a constant process of making, performed by skilled practitioners. This chapter addresses the (skilled) practice of designing itself. Following Ingold's argument, making is an operation in a field of forces, characterized by an engagement with the material, as well as a kind of work that requires skills like judgement and care. This making is seen as a rhythmical growth that lays the foundation for the next move to happen. Yet, when looking at a design process – at the actual act of designing – Ingold asks "on what grounds, if at all, can design be distinguished from making?" (Ingold 2012:29) What does it mean to design, if user-cum-producers (Ingold 2012) and basket weavers (Ingold 2000) are growing objects? What is the designer's task, where does her skilled practice lie? As I suggested earlier, when I referred to the distinction between 'diffusive' and 'expert' design (Manzini 2015), one has to look at professional design to provide an answer.

3.4.1. THE STUDIO

For Ingold, skilled practice is in general "a question not of imposing preconceived forms on inert matter but of intervening in the field of forces and currents of material wherein forms are generated. Practitioners (...) are wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world's becoming and to follow its course while bending it to their evolving purpose." (Ingold 2011:211) But, "what is the meaning of design in a world that is perpetually under construction by way of the activities of its inhabitants, who are tasked with keeping life going rather than bringing to completion projects specified at the outset?" (Ingold 2012:29) If people are keeping everything constantly under construction, bending the world to their evolving purposes, what is designing then? Ingold suggests to compare designing to drawing.²⁰ When looking at the artist Paul Klee, who "described drawing as taking a line for a walk" (Ingold 2012:29), Ingold finds similarities to his notion of growth. In drawing, by growth "the point becomes a line, but the line, far from being mounted upon the pre-prepared surface of the ground, contributes to its ever-evolving weave." (Ingold 2011:120) Drawing then means "to join with and follow the forces and flows of material that bring the form of the work into being." (Ingold 2011: 216)

I would like to elaborate on Ingold's point about drawing with an example from the world of professional design. The Vienna-based studio 'breadedEscalope' created a number of objects,

²⁰ The reason for doing so Ingold finds in the Italian word 'disegno'.

each of them called 'Original Stool'. These stools are not created through imposing onto raw materials whatever may be in the designers' mind, but are shaped within a process – they are grown, in Ingold's sense. Liquid resin is filled into a flexible silicon form in a hollow orb. By setting the orb in motion, by rolling it through the streets or throwing it into the waves of the sea, the object is formed. The designers themselves have no influence within this process, because they do not exactly know when the resin hardens and, thereby, gives the stool its form. breadedEscalope is working within a field of forces by following the forces and flows – the liquid resin, the rotating orb – that bring the form of the stool into being. In the creation of the 'Original Stool' the materials become a stool, but the designers cannot influence the point when the resin hardens – it hardens anyway at some point in time, either when it is sold in a bottle or when it is rolled in an orb. The skilled practices of the designers lie in bending the world's becoming to their emerging product: the 'Original Stool'. As the 'Tenerife Stool/ Atlantic Ocean', which was produced during the Tenerife Design Week 2010 (<http://www.breadedescalope.com/index.php/83-releases/97-tenerife-stoolatlantic-ocean>), shows, the stools do not always have the quality which is mandatory to be able to sit on them. The creation of the 'Original Stool' can be described as making in Ingold's terms, as I have elaborated on above, yet it gives no insight into the question what made the studio create the hollow orb with a flexible silicon form.

Ingold argues that if "making lies in its capacity to find the grain of the world's becoming and bend it to its evolving purpose" (Ingold 2011:211), like the creation of the 'Original Stool' or the trace of movement by a line on paper, "design is to be the other side of drawing (...) it would have to be about anticipating the future." (Ingold 2013:71) In other words, designing is the anticipation that by filling liquid resin into a silicon form in a hollow orb, which is then set in motion, different forms according to the movement of the orb will occur. The difference between design and making, Ingold argues, is that "the designer ushers in the present as the future's past, while the maker, following in his wake, is a master of improvisation, of making do with whatever is to hand." (Ingold 2012:29) As an example for a designer, he pictures "a composer, at work on a symphony. The music flies ahead in his imagination like a bird on the wing. It is all he can do to catch it and get it down before it is lost beyond the horizon of his recollection." (Ingold 2013:71) The composer in this sense introduces the music, which 'flies ahead', to the present; he 'catches' it by playing it or writing down the notes before it gets lost in his memory – before the future's past. Such a picture might meet the work of a composer, yet it does not meet breadedEscalope's work in the example of the 'Original Stool'. If the design studio had anticipated – as an act of designing – that by filling liquid resin in a flexible silicon form in a hollow orb which is then rotated, the outcome would have been stools which are very similar to each other. Within this design process, stools like the "Tenerife Stool/

Atlantic Ocean' with its extremely inclined 'seat' would have to be pictured as failures. Hence, for Ingold, who pictures design as about imagining the future, this kind of imagination is "far from seeking finality and closure, it is an imagining that is open-ended. It is about hopes and dreams rather than plans and predictions." (Ingold 2012:29) Such a description is fitting the picture of the 'Original Stools', since it was not a certain stool the studio had in mind that would be the outcome of throwing the orb into the sea. But, rather, it was the open-ended imagination that by working with various materials the outcome would be something stool-like; or something symphony-like, as in Ingold's example of the composer.

Ingold argued for a dwelling perspective, in which "the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings" (Ingold 2000:186). Both fractions, 'designers' and 'makers', have to be pictured within this perspective. 'Makers' who are the masters of improvisation, are growing things. Drawing is an example for the improvisatory practices of making (Ingold 2013). The pathways in which these improvisatory practices, like drawing, unfold, "are rather lines along which things continually come into being" (Ingold 2010:3). Design, on the other hand, Ingold pictures as "the other side of drawing" (Ingold 2013:71). "Designers, in short, are dream-catchers" (Ingold 2012:29), their task is to imagine and anticipate the future – in an open ended way. Ingold even compares artists, architects and composers to hunters: "Hunters often dream of animals before they encounter them. (...) Like hunters, they too are dream catchers." (Ingold 2013:73) For Ingold, the division between making and designing does not lie so much in "between cognitive intellection and mechanical execution" (Ingold 2013:73), but between dreams that are caught and materials which are bended. Yet, by looking at the example of the 'Original Stools' by breadedEscalope, Ingold's division appears artificial. Although Ingold implies an open end to the imagination of future – how the outcome of the stool would be – the example shows that improvisatory practices, which are relational, temporal and generative (Ingold et al. 2008), can't be exclusively occupied by 'makers'. It appears that designing and making are rather relational than distinctive, in the sense that catching dreams, pictured as designing, follows the same improvisatory practices as making. Designing then is 'workmanship of risk' (Ingold et al. 2007:15). To make this point more clearly, let me give another example of the studio.

In a talk organized by the IDRV – Institute for Design Research Vienna, discussing the question 'We are all Designers?', Michael Tatschl from 'breadedEscalope' was sitting on the podium. He was talking about the studio's recent work named 'Collective Furniture'. The studio had designed a desk within a collaborative process. This included not only the manufacturer Neue Wiener Werkstätte and marketing specialists, but also an online community discussing and reflecting on the topic desks in private homes, further public workshops,

surveys and talks. The result then was a table frame with a top which is split in different modules. The outcome of the process was that these modules can be changed and personalized: somebody who needs a working table for sewing can mount a sewing machine on a module, somebody who needs a working table for text production can purchase plugs and bookend modules. In the IDRV's talk Michael said that he pictures his work of designing not so much as inventing things but rather as mediating and moderating, what he exemplified with the project 'Collective Furniture'. Different ideas of what a desk is had to be mediated in the final result of the project. For instance, in one of the first workshops I participated, the idea of a suitable desk ranged from a high tech interactive surface to a simple workbench suitable for various crafts. But also concerns of the producers and marketing experts had to be recognized in the result. Adam Drazin, for instance, recognized by working with professional designers that "designers are especially good at bridging technical innovation and contexts of use" (Drazin 2012:252). Such a skill is similar to what Michael addressed with mediating between different stakeholders and the ideas of how a desk is used within the project of 'Collective Furniture'. To some extent this mediation can be seen as working within a 'field of forces' (Ingold 2000) – an engagement not only with material but with various thoughts and imaginations. It is also an process of improvisation, since the mediation is relational (Ingold et al 2007). Yet, Michael expressed that designing is also moderating. Within the 'Collective Furniture' project, moderating can be seen as to keep the project on track, not to revisit ideas over and over again but to keep the project going – or, in other words, to let it grow. At the moment 'breadedEscalope' are working on a new online platform where different modules for 'Collective Furniture' can be presented and manuals for DIY constructions uploaded (pers. ref.). It could be argued now that the desk is not designed with foresight, but still in a process of being made, in other words grown, as Ingold put it. This growth is relational to the people participating, moderated by the designers. Michael's reflection on designing as a process of mediating and moderating is very similar to Manzini's (2015) approach: namely that expert designers are needed to help those making diffusive design to do so. In short, expert design is mediating and moderating diffusive design.

3.4.2. THE CREATION OF CONTEXT

For Ingold, design, in distinction to making, is about the imagination of future. Arjun Appadurai, though, sees imagination in terms of design "only partly a specialist activity, confined to an arsenal or digital class and is better seen as a fundamental human capacity." (Appadurai 2013:254) Especially concerned with 'social design' Appadurai argues that, if social order is pictured as "primary product, it becomes easier to see it as the most

important result of design and as a capacity we all exercise." (Appadurai 2013:254) His interest in design originates from the 'production of locality' (Appadurai 2001), which requires ordinary people's effort in imagination to make sure that "today was as near as yesterday as it was possible to make it." (Appadurai 2013:254) From this perspective the local as well as tradition, lineage-systems and so forth are "the products of continuous efforts on a daily basis. (...) Thus, daily life in even the simplest societies must be seen as an outcome of design." (Appadurai 2013:254) Out of this perspective all objects are designed things, "as humans have brought them into the orbit of social life." (Appadurai 2013:259) Design, for Appadurai, "certainly involves the imagination, but it is defined by the imagination as a source of discipline and not imagination merely as a source of new possibilities for combination and cohabitation among objects." (Appadurai 2013:263) He observes that design is not about an isolated object – "the single biggest error in designer thinking is to imagine that the designer works over a single type of object (...) This may be called illusion of singularity, produced by a mistaken overemphasis on the idea of the designer as an artist." (Appadurai 2013:259) This is not to deny that there is a connection between art and design – for Appadurai, design mediates between art, technology and the so called market. Designers therefore do not design a single or even singular object, but rather "design contexts for objects which are subsequently sold as self-standing objects." (Appadurai 2013:263)

To exemplify his point, Appadurai examines interior design, which is a designed object itself in two senses: it is an object itself, but also part of another designed object, the house or the building. Interior design is thus simultaneously a designed object and a context, Appadurai states. "As a context it contains other objects: lightning, painted surface, fabrics, furnishings (...) more or less exposed utilities and instruments. At its outer shell or skin – the house – interior design meets another discipline, architecture. This shell is an object for architects, since it is the thing on which they operate their own design intentions. Yet, for interior designers, it serves as a container or context for other objects." (Appadurai 2013:263) He suggests objects are like Russian dolls, hence "all objects are simultaneously objects of design and contexts or partial contexts for other objects." (Appadurai 2013:263) Thus, designing in Appadurai's sense is not to create objects, but to "define contexts for objects by defining what objects can relate to each other in a plausible, legible, and teachable way." (Appadurai 2013:264) This point echoes Appadurai's earlier writings concerned with commodification, where "context refers to the variety of social arenas, within or between cultural units, that help link the commodity candidacy of a thing to the commodity phase of its career." (Appadurai 1986:15) If we consider once again the 'Original Stool' by breastedEscalope, it eventually was not the studio which defined the context for the object, but the shop I worked with. The 'Clone Stools' – as the copies of the 'Original Stools' were called – were, due to their dimensions and form, not

commodified as stools but rather as side tables. Decorated with a small table lamp, they were presented next to sofas and armchairs. So the stools were no singular objects but stood in a context. Moreover, the stools with lamps next to armchairs were also part of another context, since the shop labeled itself as a store for 'young design'. They were then – similar to Russian dolls – part of wider context, too. For instance, when the 'Tenerife Stool/Atlantic Ocean' was sold at a design auction at Dorotheum in 2012, the object entered another context – another social arena²¹ – and also entered another commodity phase of its carrier. To know if the 'Original Stools' are now side-tables, unique art objects sold at auctions or stools, Appadurai argues that "objects demand context (and therefore seek meaning). They do so through the regulative and selective work of design, which reduces the range of possibilities and makes a particular designed possibility (...) credible" (Appadurai 2013:262). In a similar way, Johan Redström suggested that a "designer, instead of simply making an object or a thing, is actually creating a persuasive argument that comes to life whenever a user considers or uses a product as a means to some end." (Redström 2008:411) The context in Appadurai's sense is the persuasive argument which is created by the process of design.

Adam Drazin who observes these processes of design, points out that within the practices of design studios the importance of design concepts. "In general terms, the concept can be understood as a principle of classification, such that behind any particular thing lies a concept of what kind of thing it is." (Drazin 2013:40) In terms of design, a concept then would be the idea for any product or service. In the case of breadedEscalope the concept would be how – using the orb, liquid resin, the flexible silicon form – the stool was created. Hence, "an idea for a sort of service or product, which could be wholly new or could be a redesign." (Drazin 2013:40) By looking at the design practice "in a social and economical environment that sees its own currency as knowledge, the concept is one way knowledge is defined, packaged, processed and handled." (Drazin 2013:40) By working with design studios Drazin observes that design concepts cannot be put on a level with thoughts and ideas. "If someone has something in mind, it is an idea and not a concept, until that moment when he or she begins to sketch it out, to do it (...) and at this moment the term concept may begin to be used." (Drazin 2013:41) By following Drazin's materialism perspective – "every design anthropologist who is working in or with design has subscribed to materialism" (Drazin 2013:44) – the manifestations of design concepts do not take shape in the final object, in the sense that the final objects contains these concepts. But, rather, concepts take other material forms such as whiteboards, sheets of paper, PostIts, PowerPoint slides, and so forth.

²¹ Social arenas do not have to be exclusively economic, as Pierre Bourdieu showed in his conception of the 'field.' In social arenas, people express and reproduce their dispositions and compete for economic as well cultural capital. (Bourdieu 1987)

In the example of the 'Intel Health Research and Innovation in Europe' project (2007–2009) Drazin was part of, he shows how these concepts come into being. The Intel project's aim was to create services and products from which older people, living in isolation in rural settings and lacking mobility, would benefit. Drazin was one of the ethnographers' team who spent a week on the routes of mini-buses which provide a door to door connection for people in rural Ireland, visiting people at home, in shops and on community events. He "looked at the rhythm of rural life, how rural inequality can result from mobility rather than wealth, and how a weekly bus ride can open up social networks, possibilities and aspiration." (Drazin 2013:43) The data was prepared in video clips, quotations, diagrams, whiteboards, photographs and so on to form different themes. Then, a professional designer drafted product concepts out of these themes. Some of these concepts were scrapped after discussions, others were developed further into simulations. "At their root was the use of interfaces and new communication technologies to support the integration of social events and transport, to place mobility at the heart of the social rhythms and initiatives we had witnessed." (Drazin 2013:43) At this point two observations are important. First, "concepts are rarely individual, but almost invariably social, manifestations of relationships (...) and actions." (Drazin 2013:42) As the example shows, the concept which was further developed was not the idea of the professional designer, but rather the result of discussions within a team and therefore manifestations of actions and relationships. Second, "the way concepts are developed, produced and communicated always has reference to construction of context" (Drazin 2013:42).

The notion of "context is one of the central concepts of social and cultural anthropology" (Dilley 2002:438). Contexts are either economical, political or religious, as well as rural, urban or global. In short: in social anthropology, they "indicate levels of analysis as well as the substantive focus of analyses." (Dilley 2002:438) This means that ethnographic interpretations rely on a sense of context. Roy Dilley addressed the problem of context in anthropology insofar as contexts have to be defined and selected. Interpretative anthropology seeks for clear-cut "native meanings for social practices, symbols, concepts and so on" (Dilley 2002:441). Within an Geertzian definition "culture (...) stands as a context that frames the meanings actors themselves attach to their lives and experiences" (Dilley 2002:450) In this light, concepts can be pictured as meanings or ideas that are shaped by the context. Dilley is critical that it has been "overlooked how contexts might be construed by local social agents with respect to the definitions, negotiations and contestations of meaning within situated contextualising practices." (Dilley 2002:441) Therefore, he framed the problem of context and its referent interpretation by thinking in terms of connections. "To interpret is to make a connection. Context too involves making connections and, by implication, disconnections." (Dilley 2002:439) Design concepts, as Drazin (2013) argues, follow such a

conception, since their meaning is generated by contextual data such as video clips, photographs and quotations, but not formed by it. So, in design practice, "contexts are deployed to explain concepts rather than the other way round." (Drazin 2013:42)

When Drazin and the team of ethnographers went back to the field to present the visualized design concepts of the 'Intel' project, in order "to evaluate which concepts had more potential and also envisage specific elements about them" (Drazin 2013:44), they realized "when we presented the concepts also implicated us as anthropologists within the communities and contexts where we worked, and implicated our informants themselves in the concepts and in the particularities of the material forms they took." (Drazin 2013:44) So, the design concept needed the context to have meaning at all, and this context involved making connections between the informants and the ethnographers, Intel and so on. In short, all of them were constructing the context. This is to be seen similar to Dilley's suggestion that the "anthropologist no longer has the privilege of defining contexts and defining meanings for others. This should be done as part of a dialogue between both parties." (Dilley 2002:451) Such contexts, as dialogical constructions, are then used to create design concepts which refer to and carry particularities of these contexts. Yet, sketched out on PostIts and whiteboards, design concepts "only exist within biographies or work flows that articulate them with notions of context, and only make sense when seen in those terms." (Drazin 2013:44) Hence, the design concept is the materialization of the actual process of designing.

3.4.3. THE POPPING UP DESIGNER CHAIRS

I had stayed with Johannes and Franziska for several days now, participating in almost every action they did in their flat. We cooked together, did the washing up together, shared the bathroom for brushing our teeth, and so forth. In the evenings we were watching a film together or we were sitting in the kitchen and talking about architecture – an interest I shared with Johannes –, their furniture or the items they decorated their flat with. Almost every piece of furniture they possessed was self-made or bought second hand, since both of them shared a passion for flea markets. Yet, they had a quite unconventional approach. While others go on flea markets to select a beautiful vase or to find a seldom record, the couple went there with shopping lists of what they needed for everyday life – a new potato peeler since the former one had got stiff, or a new wine glass because one had broken. Hence, every object or furnishing was different from the other: forks and knives had all sorts of different shapes, around a kitchen table three chairs in different forms, materials and, also, conditions were located. On a sunny afternoon I was in their kitchen with Franziska, while her boyfriend Johannes was working in the living room.

"Are you sure you don't have any preferences what we eat today?" she asked.

The kitchen was a fairly small room, since they lived in a beautiful flat with high ceilings which still had its original floor plan. The flat welcomed you with a rather large entrance hall, a double door led you into the first of the two big rooms, a bedroom. From there, another double door into the second one, which served as living room and working space – and, for the time I stayed with them, as guest room. A very narrow door connected this room with the tiny kitchen, which could also be entered by a corridor stretching alongside the two big rooms. Even the bathroom was bigger, since it had been adapted later from an additional third room. Franziska and Johannes, both enthusiastic chefs, tried to store everything they needed for cooking within the small kitchen. All their groceries, pots, pans, teas, drinks and everything imaginable needed for cooking was eventually stored in a huge shelf with over two meters in height.

We finally decided to cook mushroom goulash, since the couple occasionally went to the woods to pick mushrooms by themselves. Some of the mushrooms they dried in a machine which was constantly drying any kind of vegetables and fruits during the time I stayed with them.

"Johannes, have you heard?" Franziska was shouting through the tiny door, which was left open into the living room. "We are going to eat mushroom goulash with dumplings."

"Super," Johannes replied without getting up from his computer, "you know where the mushrooms are? We still have plenty dried ones left, you know, the very good ones we found." The dumplings were almost in the water and the onions for the goulash were about to roast, when Franziska started searching in the self. She took out several plastic boxes for inspections, looked behind tea boxes and glass tins. "I know we put them somewhere here, hm... Johannes? Do you know where we put the...?"

"Coming in a minute!" replied the voice from the living room.

"Here they are!" Franziska had taken one of the three chairs which were standing next to the small kitchen table and stepped on it to reach the jar with mushrooms. She gave me the glass and was about to step down, when Johannes entered the kitchen. He had obviously overheard that Franziska had already found the mushrooms.

"What are you doing?" Johannes almost shouted with a bit of harshness in his voice.

"I fetched the jar with the mushrooms, aren't these the good ones?" Franziska replied, a bit puzzled by his words.

"I'm not talking about the mushrooms!" he said, still with a kind of anger in his voice. "You stood on the chair!"

"And so? How else should I have reached the mushrooms? So, what is the problem with the chair anyway? Have you detected some faulty joint? You could have told me earlier, if it is about to break."

But for Johannes the problem laid somewhere else. "But this is a chair and in no terms a ladder. It is for sitting and not for standing on it!"

"You also use a chair sometimes for fetching something from the shelf. So, where is the problem? We don't even have a ladder in our flat!" Franziska replied and the situation started out to be an argument.

"Very seldom I use a chair," Johannes tried to justify himself. "But I don't use this particular chair. This is an old piece, and I don't want it to be used as a ladder!"

"Okay, okay, the next time I will use this chair," Franziska pointed at another chair next to the kitchen table.

"No! This one neither! This one is a chair designed by Josef Hoffmann!" Johannes said and looked into my direction. It turned out that Johannes didn't have an 'original' Hoffmann chair in his flat, but a reproduction from the 1980s or 1990s, and that he was aware about this fact. Neither had the other chair any economic value, and it was also some kind of reproduction, but it seemed that Johannes was quite proud of them. He waved me into the living room where he pointed out the subframe of his swivel chair. "I am almost a hundred percent sure that this is an original Arne Jacobsen frame," he explained to me when he pointed out some details.

What left me puzzled about the situation was that Johannes had never mentioned his passion for so-called design classics in our conversations we had in the kitchen, and at least two of us were sitting on chairs which had value for Johannes. I was equally confused by my impression that Franziska had heard about the 'designer chairs' for the first time, when she was told not to step on them to reach something from that tall shelf. Had Johannes forgotten to mention that these chairs were important to him in the three years they had lived together in this flat?

When Adam Drazin was "focusing on concepts as cultural phenomena in specific instances of design" (Drazin 2013:34), his aim was "to reflect on whether professional design culture may have ramifications in a broader global, everyday cultural field of design" (Drazin 2013:34). So what implications do Drazin's reflections of professional design offer for the field of dwelling? This is not that Johannes' action could be equated to a design process. Even if Appadurai's general approach to design as a fundamental human capacity (Appadurai 2013), which creates contexts to limit unforeseeable outcomes, could be assigned to the example. In the sense that Johannes' limitation not to step on specific chairs, which are design classics according to him,

but others – at least one in their kitchen – could still be used as a ladder. The question is rather how design anthropology can provide a tool to understand the situation described above.

If Johannes' designer chairs are seen as a design concept, it could be pictured as "a principle of classification, such that behind any particular thing lies a concept of what kind of thing it is." (Drazin 2013:40) In the case of the empirical example, Johannes made a distinction between the chairs one should not stand on to fetch something from the shelf and others on which standing was allowed. Drazin (2013) argues that concepts "only exist within (...) work flows that articulate them with notions of context" (Drazin 2013:44) Since Dilley pointed out that contexts are not pre-given social arenas but dialogical constructs (Dilley 2002), the connections have to be seen within the setting of the example. Similar as Drazin observed that the concepts he took back to his field in rural Ireland were constructed by his informants and their contexts as well as the ethnographers, the example above needs a critical reflection of my role in this setting. Obviously, for a ethnographer it is impossible to hide the topics he is interested in. Hence, also my interest in the furniture Franziska and Johannes stayed with, my comments on it – like saying 'that's interesting' when they talked about their purchases from flea markets –, my general passion for design and also my involvement in the shop I worked with, could be pictured as part of the context in which the designer chairs popped up. Since Franziska was obviously not aware that some chairs had a specific value for her boyfriend, it is obvious that especially Johannes made connections to the conversations I had had with him – about architecture, design and so forth. The contexts have to be seen as dialogical constructs (Dilley 2002) – just as the conversations between Johannes and me – rather than a pre-given construct Johannes is acting in. In this sense, it is possible to argue that a specific context was deployed for the concept. Without talking about architecture and design, Johannes' sudden statement about the chairs – after three years of having lived together with Franziska and several days of staying with me – would have lacked any context.

In this sense, Caroline Gatt and Tim Ingold are not arguing for an 'anthropology of design', but for an 'anthropology by means of design' (Gatt et al. 2013). Their aim is "to restore design to the heart of anthropology's disciplinary practice." (Gatt et al. 2013:140) The problem they see with anthropology of design such as Lucy Suchmann (2011) argues for, is "whether applied to design or to any other human activity is that it turns the activity in question into an object of analysis." (Gatt et al. 2013:140) By dealing with an action as an object of analysis, they observe determined ends which set out anthropology "as the description and analysis of what has already come to pass" (Gatt et al. 2013:141) – ethnographic practices which articulate cultural imaginations and describe design's intentions and practices. By 'anthropology by means of design' they argue for a "precise reverse of conventional anthropology" (Gatt et al. 2013:141): a "moving forward with people in tandem with their desires and aspirations rather than looking

back over past times" (Gatt et al. 2013:141). In the sense of not searching for explanations of phenomena in the histories and biographies of people just as Johannes'. (Indeed, one could find such source in his biography, when he pictured his father as the person who passed on an interest in design classics to him.) Yet, Gatt and Ingold's conception of anthropology by means of design "calls for practices of participant observation different from those to which ethnographer-anthropologists are accustomed." (Gatt et al. 2013:148) They rather "turn towards correspondence with the everyday lives of the people among whom they do fieldwork." (Gatt et al. 2013:148) By correspondence, they understand "moving along together (...) at every moment sharing in each other 'vivid presence'" (Ingold 2013:106). Similar to a string quartet which musicians "are not exchanging musical ideas – they are not interacting – but are rather moving along together, listening as they play, and playing as they listen" (Ingold 2013:106). By picturing the anthropologist as the cellist – in reminiscence to Tim Ingold who plays the cello – he becomes a participant among "rather than above and beyond, the ongoing situations with which they deal" (Gatt et al. 2013:154). By correspondence, one moves along with a person in his or her life "such as, it has no particular beginning point or end point, and no one knows what will come" (Gatt et al. 2013:146). Hence, the practice of correspondence allows to observe persons involved in their work flows. Drazin pointed out in regard to design concepts that they only make sense when they are pictured within work flows. 'These results of work flows are not only products or services, but could be put in a wider context of cultural creativity. By a forward reading of creativity (Ingold et al. 2007), which demands "following the ways of the world as they unfold rather than seeking to recover a chain of connections from an end point to a starting point on a route already traveled" (Gatt et al. 2013:145), work flows offer a "perception of the world in becoming." (Gatt et al. 2013:145)

Although the example of Johannes and the popping up designer chairs carries similarities to design processes, and certain characteristics of design concepts as Drazin (2013) defined them, could be applied, it has very little to do with design itself. Johannes neither mediated nor moderated any kind of process as Michael Tatschl from the design studio breadedEscalope did. Johannes did not mediate any ideas by different stakeholders, neither did he moderate any creative process. Yet, the example shows how certain insights gained from design processes can provide a different perspective on the actions of people who are not professional designers. Applying Drazin's understanding of design concepts to Johannes' actions, offered a deeper understanding of methodological implications. In bringing the example to the proximity of designing, Johannes was pictured in the light of acting in a world which is in a constant state of becoming. Rather than searching for a starting point of his actions, Design Anthropology offered a perspective in which things are constantly being made.

3.5. SUMMING UP

When Caroline Gatt and Tim Ingold suggest an 'anthropology by means of design', they "want to argue that design, far from being the exclusive preserve of a class of professional experts tasked with the production of futures for the rest of us to consume, is an aspect of everything we do" (Gatt et al. 2013:144). I argue, however, that it is actually the other way round; in the sense that design is not 'an aspect of everything we do', but that aspects of everything we do are also part of design. Design as cultural creativity is not purely inherent to a group of professionally trained people, who produce innovate services and products people consume and dwell with. Tim Ingold and Elisabeth Hallam (2007) have shown that cultural creativity should be read as improvisation rather than as innovation. By reading improvisation 'forward', they have argued that design is not the realization of a prefigured plan. Rather, it is an improvisation, which is relational to others and to the respective surroundings; which is temporal in the sense that it is rhythmic rather than metronomic and goes on with life itself; and which is generative. Ingold and Hallam's very general approach can be applied to both professional designers and non professionals. Also Enzo Manzini (2015) doesn't deny that both are designing. Yet, in his concept of 'diffusive' and 'expert' design, Manzini pictures everything as a co-design process, where the experts are triggering meaningful design processes with the help of 'diffusive design'. With such a distinction made, one has to explore the processes in the work of professional designers to know what diffusive design could be. Such a conception lays the emphasis on professional designers and their actions first. Before one can explore in which ways these activities can offer new insights in everyday actions of people who produce diffusive design, one has to study how design is done by experts.

The field of Design Anthropology, especially anthropology *of* and *with* design, offers perspectives on the work of expert design. With its critical reflections on practices where 'the new', as the outcome of design processes, produces rupture and change in existing realities, Design Anthropology can contribute to a wider field outside design studios – just as to the field of dwelling. Hence, when Gatt and Ingold state that design is "an aspect of everything we do" (Gatt et al. 2013:144), they equate designers with users-as-designers – just as Daniel Miller, who suggested that householders can be pictured analogously to designers (Miller 2011). When Design Anthropology helps to gain a different understanding of "using and designing as a process of carrying on whereby things are not actually finished" (Gunn 2012:5), it does not fuse together using and designing into one category of action. Rather, picturing both designing and using as a process of carrying on, criticizes the perception that one group is concerned with production and the other with consumption. If one takes Design Anthropology seriously, one has to be aware that such insights are gained by the analyses of design processes and not by looking at the everyday actions of ordinary people.

The example of Franz and his Berlin table, for instance, could have easily be explained as consumption by using a material culture perspective. Yet, by raising the question who is using and who is producing or designing in the light of co-designing processes (Redström 2012), an alternative view was offered. Ingold's notion of the user-cum-producer challenges the separation between production and consumption. By picturing Franz, who, as a user-cum-producer, is skilled in cleaning the surface of his table in such a way that it looks brand new, I rejected what Ingold called 'standard view'. Following this view, Franz' action of cleaning would "start with an idea in mind, of what we want to achieve, and with a supply of the raw material needed to achieve it. And it is to finish at the moment when the material has taken on the intended form." (Ingold 2013:20) The concept of the user-cum-producer offers us to think of objects in terms of being grown – as an "engagement of forces and materials within an ongoing process of life" (Ingold 2012:29). This is what Ingold calls 'dwelling perspective', in which "the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings." (Ingold 2000:186) By such an engagement Franz is producing the foundations for the next thing to happen. Hence, a 'staying with things', in terms of dwelling, is in no way deemed to be passive – it is neither "virtual inactivity" (Heidegger 1993:349) nor plane consumption of things. Rather, things are grown while staying with them in one's surroundings.

Yet, growing always involves skills. In this sense, Franz was pictured as a skilled practitioner, "whose skill lies in (...) [his] ability to find the grain of the world's becoming and to follow its course while bending it to (...) [his] evolving purpose." (Ingold 2011:216) The notion of the skilled practitioner shifts the interest away from the object and towards the subject – the practitioner himself. But this does not mean that everybody who has skills is a designer. Manzini suggested to picture design close to human talents, which "may evolve into a skill and sometimes into a discipline (...): everybody can run, but not everybody takes part in the marathon and few become professional athletes" (Manzini 2015:37). As I have shown with the example of the design studio breadedEscalope, design requires skills just as mediation and moderation, along with other skills. Thus, designing is also a working within the field of forces (Ingold 2000) as a kind of making by a skilled practitioner – yet, the skills of Franz and breadedEscalope are different from each other. The skills of designers do not lie so much in the imagination of a future, as Ingold (2012) has suggested. For Arjun Appadurai, imagination is a fundamental human capacity for various forms of production – for the production of locality, for instance. If design is then pictured in this way, it would be such a fundamental capacity, too. Indeed, there are tendencies in design which are exclusively concerned with imagining future, like 'critical design', for example. Projects as those presented by Fiona Raby

and Anthony Dunne do not use design to create products and services, but to create ideas (Dunne et al. 2013). Hence, critical design can be pictured as a cultural commentary – "as an artistic provocation which asked questions" (Drazin 2012:252). Yet, here the skills of the professionals lie more in the visualization of (design) concepts, that is moderating various assumptions about future and mediating them via (design) ideas.

Design Anthropology as the critical examination of design processes and the involvement in such processes, thus does not offer a perspective to a world where 'all men are designers' – as Victor Papanek's famous quotation is all too often improperly used. Rather, Design Anthropology offers different perspectives to other topics, just as dwelling. Adam Drazin, for instance, who closely looked at designing, asked which material forms design concepts could have, and gained the understanding that concepts deploy contexts. In difference to an understanding where concepts are understood within contexts, design concepts make use of contexts to gain meaning within work flows. The example of the popping up designer chairs showed how such a reflection on contexts offers a way of interpreting this situation – how one works within the field of forces while staying with things.

4. CONCLUSION

I asked what dwelling as an activity one performs in the domestic sphere besides many other activities is. Based on Heidegger's statement that "dwelling itself is always a staying with things" (Heidegger 1993:353), I asked what it means to stay with things. By emphasizing material culture, I considered things in regard to what they mean, do and are. In concluding my argument I seek to take material culture under design anthropological considerations now, in order to provide an answer to my questions.

I started the design anthropological considerations with an overview of the different approaches to the field. My interest was how Design Anthropology – the areas of anthropology *of* and anthropology *with* design (Gunn et al. 2012) – could inform the topic of dwelling. I argued that anthropology with design must not be confused with alternative styles of presentation of anthropological knowledge, just as film and photography are often considered to be. Rather, anthropology with design partly meets what Karen Barad suggested: not to account phenomena as something which could be observed, but as occasions which are always entangled with the researchers. In her book *Meeting the Universe Half Way* (2007), she argues that "phenomena are the ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting 'agencies'" (Barad 2007:139). Although, by dwelling on Niels Bohr's object-object relations, she opens up discussions towards a new unity of science – which I personally regard as dispensable²² –, her argument calls attention to the view that phenomena ethnographer account are not lying out there in a specific nature or society and can then be recorded. Rather, every phenomenon is entangled with informants and researchers within the action which is performed. In this sense, also the design process in which the researcher is part in only exists as a phenomena because one *is* part of it. Therefore, anthropology with design contributes not only to the academic discipline – as an anthropology of design – but also to the design process itself while being part of a design team.

Since design could be described as a "process and product [which is] aiming specifically at intervention in existing realities" (Otto et al. 2013:3), I was asking, if home improvements and decorations could be seen as design, too. Such a view was stressed by Daniel Miller, who argued to picture householders analogously to designers, since householders are creating themselves through objects by the process of objectification – echoing "the idea that objects make us, as part of the very same process by which we make them" (Miller 2010:60).

²² Yet, I think that Barad's considerations are especially fruitful for those in the discipline of anthropology who are still arguing that "mainstream Anthropology still lacks any scientific standards and is occupied by postmodern and eclectic approaches" (Hakami 2012:61).

Extracting parts from Hegel, Marx and Simmel, Miller argued that by sublation – or objectification, as it is translated from Hegel – people overcome the contradiction produced by the alienatory consequences of consumer society. Therefore, one way of appropriating material objects is through consumption. Henriette's sideboard exemplified the way in which objects are alienated and sublated by embedding them in social relations. For Henriette, her sideboard became a gap-filler, something which completed her furnishing of the room. In Miller's terms, Henriette also constructed herself through being completely furnished. By doing so, her consciousness – to stick to Hegel – arrived on a next level through building a social relation to the object by which Henriette becomes herself.

Although Miller's concept of objectification has little to do with Design Anthropology itself, a similar problematical view on users-as-designers was stressed by Tim Ingold and Caroline Gatt, by stating that design is an aspect of everything we do (Gatt et al. 2013). One could argue now that every theory has its time. While "consumption, in the form of home decorating is seen as a focal point, rather than a 'reflection', of the construction and negotiation of 'household philosophies'" (Clarke 2001:32), the new millennium brought a shift towards the maker. Richard Sennett, for example, reflected on craftsmanship not only in terms of manual labor, but also in terms of computer programming, designing, cooking or playing an instrument (Sennett 2008). "The craftsman represents the special human condition of being engaged" (Sennett 2008:20) – with materials, one could add. In terms of design, Adam Drazin observed that when material things get more digitalized and digital skills more popularized, "design, then, is becoming a popular public activity" (Drazin 2012:260). Yet, when I asked *who* designs, the picture became a different one. There is a difference between decorating a tin can radio to one's own aesthetical means and designing one – as I showed with the example of Victor Papanek (1984). Enzo Manzini, however, suggested to picture everything as a co-designing process (Manzini 2015). According to him, everyone performs so-called diffusive design, but, to come up with meaningful products and services, experts are needed. Expert designers who are providing digital tools, software architecture, hardware, templates and so on, which makes design as a popular activity possible. Although designers are still perceived as 'divine creators' – relying on a Renaissance concept (Kemp 1974) – who contribute to "a world that is always lagging, always in need of being brought up to date (...) in need of design" (Suchman 2011:5), I suggested to picture the practice of these experts as cultural improvisation. By following Ingold and Hallam's argument to read creativity forward "in terms of the movements that gave rise to" (Ingold et al. 2007:3) products and services rather than backwards in terms of its results, design can be characterized as generative, temporal, relational (Ingold et al. 2007). Temporal in the sense that it is not a metronomic step-by-step realization of a plan, but rhythmical by following the flow of life. Relational in the sense that designers do

not individually act upon the world, but are enmeshed in an "entire field of relationships to bring forth the person situated in it" (Ingold et al. 2007:7). Generative in the sense to make "the most of the multiple possibilities they afford for keeping life going" (Ingold et al. 2007:15) on.

Since Ingold's and Hallam's concept addresses cultural improvisation in a very general way, it is not bound to expert designers exclusively – "improvisation is the way we work" (Ingold et al. 2007:12). Further, it was observed that especially within co-designing processes – in regard to concepts of 'prosumers' (Toffler 1984) or 'lead users' (Redström 2012) – the distinction between users on the one side and designers on the other became increasingly problematic (Redström 2012). Johan Redström argued that the oppositional pair of using and designing has something to do with how we perceive objects (Redström 2012, 2008). Therefore, I raised the question of the matter of form. "We still struggle with articulation of relations between design and use that differ significantly from an understanding that first designers design, then users use" (Redström 2012:83). One way of diminishing the opposition between design and use I sighted in Tim Ingold's concept of the user-cum-producer. By use, he argues, we are producing things as such. Franz and his solid wooden table served as an example to explain Ingold's concept. When Franz is cleaning his table after use, he is engaged with the wooden material preventing it from catching patina. Moreover, by doing so, he is also laying the foundation for the next thing to happen; another meal on a neat looking table, another night of political discussions over a bottle of wine, or even the possibility that the table could catch up some patina similar to Franz' table in Berlin. This does not follow any plan "by which an idea, already framed within the imagination, is realised in a material substrate pre-prepared to receive it" (Ingold 2011:177), but done by use – by cleaning, or actually sanding down the wood. Thus, material form does not remain static, rather, it is in a constant process of being made – or grown, as Ingold (2000) suggested – through use. When Ingold refers to growing inanimate things, he calls for a change in the perspective on making. "We are accustomed to think of making as a project (...) [which we] finish at the moment when the material has taken on the intended form." (Ingold 2013:20) By the notion of growing, Ingold understands "that the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings." (Ingold 2000:186) This engagement with the surroundings is also an engagement with active materials. Working within the field of forces (Ingold 2000) the maker is joining forces by which the form gradually unfolds. Thus, in Ingold's terms, materials do act too.

According to Alfred Gell's concept of agency, things – or, as in his terms, artworks – carry agency and can act within and on social relations (Gell 1998). Material objects, in this concept,

embody complex intentionalities and are able to mediate agency. Looking at an artwork and being astonished by the virtuosity of the artist, the artwork has agency insofar as it points towards the agent who produced the artwork. Although Gell's theory is often used as a representational theory – partly because the terminology he uses is taken from semiotics –, the theory he offers is non-representational (Leach 2007). Gell was not so much interested in objects themselves, but in making "sense out of behavior in the context of social relations." (Gell 1998:11) Therefore, objects can only act within social relations, agency is not inherent to them. Even when objects are produced to influence thoughts and actions of others, the other is needed to act upon as a patient, so the object can be an agent. In the example of Henriette's 'Tram Chair', the chair has agency, since the object forces her to act, to reincorporate it into her social context – her apartment equipped with all different kinds of furnishings.

Yet, Ingold's notion of working within the field of forces is somewhat closer to Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory, since both differ from Gell insofar as agency is not bound to humans exclusively. Latour, who is challenging the 'modern' division between objects and subjects, argued that none of these two has agency. Agency is neither inherent to humans nor to non-humans, but distributed throughout a network. In the case of Henriette's 'Tram Chair' many different actants could be identified: the owner of a piece of furniture, the designer who created the piece, the manufacturer, the object itself, the material, other furnishings in the room and in the flat, the fieldworker asking questions. It is within this network where the capacity to act lies. Though, I was not looking at such a network by disentangling its actants, I rather addressed the role of things. In Latour's sense, things are doing everything, yet they are doing nothing at all, since the capacity to act is not inherent to them. They are just actants within a network. Ingold argues against picturing actants as closed entities. An object "is to say, (...) not a closed-in, self-contained object that is set over against other objects with which it may then be juxtaposed or conjoined. It is rather a bundle or tissue of strands, tightly drawn together here but trailing loose ends there, which tangle with other strands from other bundles." (Ingold 2011:91) His "claim, then, is that action is not the result of an agency that is distributed around the network, but rather emerges from the interplay of forces" (Ingold 2011:92). Working in this field of forces is for Ingold a bodily movement and "it is the attentiveness of this movement that qualifies it as an instance of action and, by the same token, qualifies me as an agent." (Ingold 2011:94) In emphasizing making as a bodily movement, such action requires skills. Skilled movements of a practitioner, weaving together different materials, are laying the foundation for the next move to happen – in Ingold's terms, this is growing objects. Thus, in this sense, forms themselves are "never complete but are continually under construction." (Ingold 2000:172)

Since I regarded the notion of users-as-designers as problematic, I asked along with Ingold, how making in terms of growing can be distinguished from designing. By looking at the design studio 'breadedEscalope', I suggested that designing could be pictured as a process of cultural improvisation. Although Ingold and Hallam argued that "improvisation is the way we work" (Ingold et al. 2007:12), I however stated that designing is a distinct activity. Rather than drawing on the suggestion that design, in distinction to making, is about imagining the future (Ingold 2012), I suggested to picture designing as a process of moderating and mediating. Moderating in the light of keeping a project going on in terms of growing. Mediating in the sense that designing is a relational process which has to deal with different ideas. The latter suggestion on designing echoes Manzini's (2015) approach of seeing every design process as a co-design – between those who make diffusive design and experts which are needed to make meaningful products, services and initiatives out of it. Although Franz, for instance, is growing his table, he is neither mediating different ideas, nor is he moderating any process. Thus, to picture any householder as designer is misleading, since design is not part of everything we do (Ingold et al. 2013), but, in reverse, everything we do is also part of design.

By considering design as a distinct activity which has references to the everyday, a closer look at design practices can also offer new perspectives on the topic of dwelling. Such a perspective was offered by Adam Drazin, who was working in design teams and elaborated on design concepts (Drazin 2013). By applying Drazin's notion of design concepts to a situation I observed while staying with Johannes and Franziska, I have reflected "on whether professional design culture may have ramifications in a broader global, everyday cultural field of design" (Drazin 2013:34). Understood in general terms, a concept "can be understood as a principle of classification, such that behind any particular thing lies a concept of what kind of thing it is." (Drazin 2013:40) Yet, design concepts are distinct because they are not individual concepts but "social, manifestations of relationships (...) and actions." (Drazin 2013:42).

Design concepts in this sense must not be confused with ideas and thoughts. Semiotic theory, following Saussure, privileged the idea over the material thing. In the example of the 'Tram Chair' I showed that pieces of furniture are not communicators of an idea (Hackenschmidt 2011), neither are design concepts part of the finished product. Henriette considered her 'Tram Chair' to be technoid; a denotation which has to be seen in regard to the combination of old and new furniture in her flat, pieces that she had carefully chosen. Webb Kaene argued for a semiotic ideology, which mediates the relations between words or ideas and things. Instead of laying the attention just either on things or on ideas, semiotic ideology pays attention to the relation of two apparently distinct entities. By using the Peircean notion of the qualisign – describing a sign which has to be embodied in an object – Kaene argues that the "character of things is neither subordinated to, nor isolated from, communication and thought" (Kaene

2005:183). Since the qualisign 'technoidity', as in the example of Henriette's Tram Chair, needs the chair to be embodied, the object itself is equally part of Henriette's self-representation as the concept she embodies in the chair. Thus, the Tram Chair is not a mere representation of 'technoidity', but rather, the chair is used to mediate social relations – towards the designer and all the other objects Henriette's has placed in the room. Amiria Henare, Martin Holbraad and Sari Wastell, in *Thinking Through Things* (2007), argued against any distinction between things and concepts – "things (...) are concepts as much as they appear to us as 'material' or 'physical' entities." (Henare et al. 2007:16) Rather than treating things as modes of representation, they argue to "treat them as modes of defining them." (Holbraad 2011:12) According to this view a thing is equally a concept and, thus, a concept is equally a thing. As an example, Henare argues to perceive that baby powder in the context of Cuban diviners is power, instead of concluding that people think that the powder is powerful (Henare et al. 2007). According to the *Thinking Through Things* approach, no distinction should be made between concept and thing. Also Drazin, when addressing design concepts, states that "the object is not a representation of thought but is a manifest thought." (Drazin 2013:35) Yet, these concepts are not the final products, but they are things such as post-its or power-point slides.

Drazin argues further that design concepts also always have a reference to the construction of context, since context is deployed for the concept, not the other way round (Drazin 2013). As Roy Dilley emphasized, contexts are not pre-given social arenas but dialogical constructs between the fieldworker and his or her interlocutors (Dilley 2002). While Henare et al. (2007) approach relies on Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's concept of life worlds (De Castro 2012), Drazin points out that in design concepts context is deployed to give meaning to the concept (Drazin 2013). De Castro describes with Amerindian societies that a concept remains while the object differs according to different worlds. So, in the world of jaguars blood is beer (De Castro 1998). Thus it is the context which matters by which blood is beer and powder powerful or baby powder. Yet, for Drazin, the meaning of concepts evolves with reference to contexts – as dialogical constructs originated in fieldwork. Thus, design concepts "only exist within (...) work flows that articulate them with notions of context" (Drazin 2013:44). Such a perspective offered a distinct interpretation of the example of the Popping Up Designer Chairs. Rather than questioning Johannes' understanding of design classics or what Johannes thinks are design classics – since apparently the chairs are reproductions – or what kind of concept was embodied in the chair, I emphasized the context by which the chairs became meaningful. Since the context is a construction where I have to include myself, my interest and my conversations with Johannes. This leads towards methodological implications Design Anthropology offers. The concept of Johannes' chairs, which is also the thing itself, then can

only be understood with reference to context and only exists within work flows – or, in other words, within fieldwork.

Indeed, a similar point could be made in regard to Daniel Miller's objectification, since it is an endless process of alienation and sublation. Just as I have argued in *Gustav's Cave*, where his room was actually not equipped with furniture, but rather with people. Every single object he pointed out referred to a relationship with people important to him. A piece of cloth hanging on a wall was connected to a friend with whom he took his first trip to India, for instance. The objects outside Gustav's room were pictured as objectification of his relation to his flatmate; since both knew that one day one of them would move out of the flat they shared, the objects were not receiving much attention. I have argued that the pieces of furniture can be pictured as the materialization of their social relation. In a similar way the *The Popping Up Designer Chairs* could be seen as the materialization of the relationship between Johannes and me. Yet, in the light of Design Anthropology, which aim is to challenge a clear cut distinction in "building closer relations between using and producing, designing and using, people and things" (Gunn et al. 2012:1), such situations appear differently. By studying a particular action, characterized as a collaboration between various actors, which is future oriented and aiming at interventions in existing realities (Otto et al. 2013), Design Anthropology emphasizes not only movements of thought, but also bodily actions which are engaged with material objects. Johannes was not only using and creating new relationships toward objects (Miller 1998), but, he was also intervening in a existing reality by telling his girlfriend not to step onto the chairs.

I considered dwelling as a staying with things, as an activity performed alongside other activities – in the light of the premises I extracted from Heidegger. When Heidegger argues for an inseparability between building and dwelling (Heidegger 1993), dwelling is shifted towards making. In this sense, dwelling is not only a mere becoming of oneself, but also a making of oneself – by a creative, relational, generative activity; as a skilled process engaged with things in their surroundings. Although I have argued that dwelling has nothing to do with designing, the field of Design Anthropology helps to shape new perspectives on the topic of dwelling – the activity one performs while staying with things.

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ABSTRACT

DEUTSCH

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Thema Wohnen hinsichtlich der Frage, wie es als aktiver Akt im Sein mit Dingen verstanden werden kann. Nachdem Studien zur materiellen Kultur dazu beigetragen haben, Beziehungen zwischen sozialen Subjekten und materiellen Objekten zu verstehen, betrachte ich das Thema Wohnen aus einer design-anthropologischen Perspektive, um zu zeigen welche Sichtweisen dieses Feld auf das Wohnen eröffnet. Da sich die Design-Anthropologie mit der Erschaffung von neuen und innovativen Produkten und Dienstleistungen beschäftigt, verschiebt sie den Blickwinkel auf das Thema Wohnen von der Aneignung von Objekten auf deren Herstellung. Häufig wird behauptet, dass Designen als Teil von allem was Menschen tun gesehen werden kann – ich argumentiere, Designen als eine spezifische Tätigkeit zu sehen, die von jenen ausgeführt wird die darin ausgebildet sind. Da aber Designprozesse nicht unabhängig von sozialen und kulturellen Gegebenheiten betrachtet werden können, spiegelt sich alles was Menschen tun auch in diesen Prozessen wider. Eine derartige Betrachtung reflektiert sowohl auf die Aktivität des Wohnens als auch auf die materiellen Objekte mit denen gewohnt wird, und eröffnet dadurch eine andere Perspektive auf das Wohnen wie auch auf die materielle Kultur selbst.

ENGLISH

This text reflects on the topic of dwelling, and how it can be grasped as an activity one performs while staying with material objects in the domestic sphere. While Material Culture contributed to the relationships between the social subject and material objects, I shall reflect on which perspective could be gained by a design-anthropological approach towards dwelling. Since Design Anthropology is concerned with the creation of new and innovative products and services, it shifts the topic of dwelling towards the making of objects rather than appropriating them. Although it was stated that design is just part of everything people do, I argue for design as a distinct activity performed by those who are trained in it. In considering designing not apart from a social and cultural reality, I shall picture everything people do as part of design. Such a perspective reflects back on the activity of dwelling and material objects people are staying with in the domestic sphere, and opens up new perspectives for material culture.