

## [DE]CONSTRUCTING DESIGN: ON THE FRAMEWORK OF GOODSCAPES

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'... we need modes of thought that recognise design as a practice within culture and that bring to bear on its study the methods that have been used to understand other cultural practices and their resultant artefacts [...] the study of design as culture seeks an understanding of design practice in the wider social field where it occurs.'

**Victor Margolin**

*The Politics of the Artificial* (2002:51)

### Introduction

One of the main matters of discussion in the design discourse recently is the fostering of a *design climate* that would cultivate the application of design thinking in vast areas of the society. Along the same lines of what Manuel Castells (2000) denominates the *milieu of innovation* and Richard Florida (2002) names the *social structure of creativity*, the creation of a space that actively promotes the use of design, develops the infrastructure necessary for it, and fosters a synergy with the human capital is of growing interest to designers, institutions, industries, governments, and society in general.

The artificial creation of such spaces may be questioned in relation to its effectiveness, but nonetheless, resolutions and actions must be taken to at least build the foundations for a design structure. Some of these measures are taken by governments at regional and national levels through the creation of design policies. However, as John Heskett (1999) stresses, there is no theoretical framework to identify different modes of design policy, nor to assess their impact on national economies. The existing documents focused on design policies appear to be more descriptive of their objectives and implementation plans than on making a critical analysis or evaluating their impact.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the current course of design policies around the world from a global standpoint, by introducing a framework derived from cultural anthropology. The paper is structured in two sections: it will first introduce the theoretical framework of global cultural flows devised by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996), and it will present my own concept of *Goodscapes*; secondly, it will examine how this theoretical framework can be a useful means to identify the opportunities and weaknesses of design policies from a global, dynamic perspective. The analysis is structured along two lines: design policy as a component of the Goodscapes paradigm, and in correlation to *Ideoscapes*, *Ethnoscapas*, *Financescapas*, *Technoscapes* and *Mediascapas*.

Due to the limitations of resources to investigate various design policies from around the world, this paper is mainly based on the research papers from more than 24 countries<sup>1</sup> presented in the following publications:

- *Design Policy and Global Network* (2002) World Design Forum Proceedings, Seongnam. ICSID and KIDP

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<sup>1</sup> Australia, China, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latin America, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, South Korea, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and Vietnam

- *Design Policy and Promotion Programmes in Selected Countries and Regions* (2003) Hytönen, J.; Heikkinen, H., Designium

Although generalisations are seldom recommendable, in this case it is possible to find enough similarities amongst the various policy initiatives to provide a preliminary analysis using the Goodscapes framework. For further understanding, it is necessary to concentrate on one initiative or country with explicit and extensive information. The objective of this paper is to draw attention to matters that – from a global, interactive perspective – design policies tend to overlook. If the following remarks fail to consider the specifics of the design policies, I apologise in advance. This analysis is based on documents by various authors so it might not show the entire spectrum of the situation. For this purpose, however, these papers have allowed an overview of the general conditions; I thank all those authors that have contributed to the discussion on design policy.

### **The Five Dimensions of Arjun Appadurai**

The anthropologist **Arjun Appadurai** (1996) describes the processes of globalisation as ‘*a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order [...] The complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics [...]*’ (Appadurai 1996:32-33). Although a worldwide interaction has existed for many centuries, originally mainly due to warfare and religious conversions, Appadurai stresses that in today’s world that interaction has a new intensity: the process has accelerated by means of technologies and innovation shifts and exchanges, especially in transportation and information. All these forces and accelerated processes have created a new global cultural economy, characterised by dense, intersected and inconsistent arrangements.

Appadurai (1996) proposes a framework to describe and explain these complex processes and disjunctures. His model is based on the metaphor of landscapes to explain the perspectival relations between the actors and the environments of the present global scene. The suffix –*scapes* is used to visualise modern global phenomena as the outcome of different landscapes, which overlay, shift and flow constantly, distressing each other and being perceived differently in diverse contexts and moments. The framework proposed by the author considers five dimensions of global cultural flows:

- **Ethnoscapes:** The landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which people live: immigrants, tourists, refugees, exiles, etc.
- **Technoscapes:** The global configuration of technologies moving at high speeds across previously impermeable borders.
- **Financescapes:** The global grid of currency speculation and capital transfer.
- **Mediascapes:** The distribution of the capabilities to produce and disseminate information and the large complex repertoire of images and narratives generated by these capabilities.
- **Ideoscapes:** The ideologies of states and counter-ideologies of movements, around which nation-states have organised their political cultures.

### **Goodscapes: the Sixth Dimension**

The framework proposed by Appadurai (1996) would be ideal to describe the current interactive, dynamic and overlapping processes within design, if only it considered one more dimension: *Goodscapes*. I propose to build on Appadurai’s construction of landscapes in order to reflect on the different processes of products, services and systems within the global economy where design

plays a significant role (Bello 2004). *Goodscales* refer to the paths, paces and experiences of the conception, production, distribution, exchange, use and disposal of goods: products, services and artificial systems, both physical and virtual. The paths, volumes, speed and scale of *Goodscales* are dependent on their relations with the other landscapes, and on the relations among the other landscapes themselves, as the production and use of goods is an outcome of the experiences and actions of people, ideas, technologies, media and finance.

There have been concepts in design theory to describe the weight of the sum of products that surround us, and of the interaction among them, the actors (producers, users and public in general), and the environment. Victor Margolin (1995) aggregates objects, activities, services and environments in a constellation that he calls the *product milieu*, always defined by its tangible characteristics but accounted for by its actions. It is an interactive presence in the world; hence it is flexible, lively and even aggressive. As it both facilitates and inhibits action, the product milieu becomes clearly a social practice. From another perspective, Andrea Branzi defines the metropolis as '*a general system of construction of the design universe... [that] holds in its capacious bowels all the individual projects, whether they are homogeneous, discontinuous, or dissociated from each other, and from the metropolis itself.*' (Branzi 1988:20). Branzi emphasises the complex reality that any project faces when it is created: it is both a proposal for the modification of this reality, and part of a system for its representation.

What differentiates *Goodscales* is that it positions the flowing agglomerate of products, services and artificial systems in relation to five specific dimensions. All together these keep redefining themselves and the local and global realities.

### **Design Policy within the *Goodscales* Paradigm**

The shift from an *industrial society* to a *knowledge and informational society* (Castells 2000), and furthermore to a *creative economy* (Florida 2002) is reflected in major changes to the production systems of regions and nations: from tangible objects to services, complex systems, concepts, networks, and (virtual) realities. '*Design, confronted by the complexity of this new environment, is falling behind in its knowledge and practice [...] it is struggling to re-design design.*' (Ferrara 2002:118). Coinciding with this view, Manuel Castells anticipates that '*architecture and design are likely to be redefined in their form, function, process and value in the coming years*' (Castells 2000:448). Initiatives committed to design, and especially design policies – understood as the endorsement and proceedings of a government to encourage the use of design by the public and private for local development – should be targeted to assist designers, industry and communities to deal with the new challenges faced by design.

This requires that design initiatives, whether policies, projects, products, services or systems, envision wider perspectives that consider the strongest forces felt in today's global conditions. The framework of *Goodscales* is helpful to analyse the current design policy movements around the world because of the international conditions in which they operate. On one hand, design policies are the measures taken by governments who are aware that the modern mechanisms of production and consumption have been revolutionised by the processes of globalisation, mainly driven by the new technologies and a liberalised market economy. On the other, the process of design in the production, flow and consumption of goods is a major contributor to the distinctiveness of the era of post-industrialism.

Design policies ought to be particular and purposeful. First, the general state of design in a country or region is dependent on macro and micro-level factors, such as government will, education levels, investment in R&D, level of industrialisation and economic development (Hytönen 2003), and in the light of the *Goodscapes* paradigm, dependent on global processes and orders. Second, a design policy is usually focused on one or more goals, as for example, on the development of business and industry, on general and professional education, on public services, or on the definition of a national identity (Hytönen 2003).

A clear objective in all the design policies analysed is the common effort to integrate into global networks of design, production, and consumption. In the eyes of governments, these networks will not only strengthen their competitive advantage but will make them players of the modern world; they will integrate them into the new global landscapes. Koshi (2002) points out three global issues that are directly affecting the development of design: 1) the World Trade Organisation and the liberalisation of trade markets, 2) the emergence of the knowledge economy, specifically the expansion of Intellectual Property generation through design, and 3) the convergence of technologies.

Design policies themselves – amongst all projects flowing in the *Goodscapes* – are dependent on the performance of the other five landscapes, but they have as well the capacity to transform the conditions for them. For instance, a design policy (*Goodscapes*) can only dawn from the right combination of ideological state of mind of the government (*Ideoscapes*) in the right economic conditions (*Financescapes*) with a clear technological purpose (*Technoscapes*), where the human resources (*Ethnoscapes*) have been well-informed (*Mediascapes*) about the capabilities of design thinking. Subsequently, a functioning design policy (*Goodscapes*) can assist economic growth (*Financescapes*) and technological development (*Technoscapes*), building up a design promotion system (*Mediascapes*) that will ultimately change how people perceive design (*Ideoscapes*). These are processes that are not bounded by physical borders, but flow across a new global space while completely transforming the sense of locality.

Design policies worldwide fail to consider the flow of products, services and artificial systems within and between borders. These flows, present from conception during the design process to the final disposal of a product, certainly affect the product relationship with the producer, the consumer and the environment. For example, there is no consideration of the fragmentation of the production-consumption chain: a product concept developed in France by Korean, Namibian and Australian designers, which is set to be produced partly in China, partly in India and partly in Brazil, and finally sold on the American continent to users from practically every nationality.

Some countries have succeeded in integrating the different initiatives to develop design, through design policies or other means, from professional designers' organisations, to industry, to educational institutions, to the government and the public. However, most countries are institutionally disarticulated, which only accentuates the segmentation and the inequality in production and consumption systems.

### **Design Policy and the other Cultural Landscapes**

When design policies are analysed in relation to the other cultural landscapes, it is possible to question the relationships between them (see Diagram 1), which will raise questions that those involved in the policy-making process should consider.

DIAGRAM 1	<b>Goodsapes</b> Flows of products, services & artificial systems Design climate or milieu Processes of design, production, use & disposal Fragmentation of production & consumption processes
<b>Ideoscapes</b>	Ideological, political motives Import & export of design ideas General & particular design paradigms Perception of design
<b>Technoscapes</b>	Technological & innovation capabilities Technological inventions & transfer Applications of technology Relations to technology and science policy
<b>Mediascapes</b>	Creation & circulation of design knowledge Promotion initiatives and systems Local and global databases Interfaces between government, industry & society
<b>Financescapes</b>	Economic strategies for development Need to adjust to liberal, market-oriented economies Support from government and industry Participation in global financial system
<b>Ethnoscapes</b>	Human, social and cultural capital Global culture vs local identities Diversification of consumers and users Inclusion and accessibility

The following is a summary of the analysis of those correlations:

***Ideoscapes:***

There are similarities between design policies of different countries, although they are focused on their own context's needs. Their common ideological aims are: 1) to create a design climate, 2) to define a national/regional identity, 3) to generate and attract new ideas, and 4) to develop a competitive innovation system. A clear development path can be recognised, with a shift from the pursuit of efficiency towards wellbeing and equality, a transition from quantity to quality, a growth from economic development to sustainability and welfare, and an expansion from tangible products towards complex design proposals and methodologies.

There are conflicting movements to, on the one hand, modernise the countries' design movement by the integration of Eastern and Western design culture, while on the other, to resist a global design culture by promoting the country's own cultural and design identity. For example, identities are marketed as brands, and international intellectual property rights are transforming the operations of SMEs in developing countries. The flows and exchanges of design experts between and within nations result in the absorption of ideas, styles, trends and updated information.

The design paradigm is closely related to the concept of the creative economy where creative human capital is the base for development. Therefore, design knowledge is being expanded into various levels of education (from primary education to professional training to civil society), to different communities, to different fields, and to different physical places.

*Similarities between many of the design policies are caused very much by the sharing of experts that consult from one country to the other. Clearly, ideologies are flowing, crossing the borders, to then be adapted to the local context, needs and potentials. In principle, this is not a negative aspect, unless it becomes a vicious movement trapped in one view that fails to see other possibilities.*

### ***Technoscapes:***

A main driver for design policies is the development of competitiveness and innovation capabilities towards the use of design, separately or jointly with other 'technology policies'. Technological environments evolve from the introduction, digestion and absorption of foreign technologies towards the creation of original and innovative technologies and applications. Yet, there is an uneven development and use of technologies in the world, known as the *digital divide*.

Technology is affecting design in two ways: in the production methods themselves (from designing assisted by computers to specialised production processes and distribution systems), and in the applications of technology through design (e.g. ICT applications, and software and hardware). There is a shift from mass production towards specialisation and diversification of products and services. Design is the interface between the technology and the user, and therefore, there are appeals to integrate design and technology policies.

*The development of new technologies, and the transfer of those technologies together with innovative applications, is a key factor dominating the new design paradigm. Most of the policies have a clear focus: import technologies and develop applications, develop grass-root innovations, or develop new technologies. One very important point to consider is how technologies are currently encouraging two opposing movements: bridging (e.g. ICT) and dividing (digital divide) communities.*

### ***Mediascapes:***

The regional and national design promotion systems are the core of most design policies as the mean to circulate design knowledge. The main aims of design promotion are: 1) to inform the industry of design capabilities and advantages of its use, 2) to educate the public in general about design, 3) to update designers of the development of design education and practice locally and globally, and 4) to promote a society in which creative minds are developed and nurtured.

Several promotion initiatives coexist in the same context to reach a wider domestic and/or international audience, through printed media, exhibitions, awards, grants, and digital databases. The various institutions involved in the promotion systems, such as Design Councils, Design Centres, Consultancies, and R&D Centres, serve as interfaces between the government, the industry, the educational apparatus, the designers and the society.

*Although the promotion system is probably the most developed part of design policies, the new media for promotion is still not fully exploited. On the one hand, there are many actors that do*

*not participate in the design discourse, and on the other, designers should be outstanding at creating a communication system to explain and diffuse the ideas created by the design community.*

### ***Financescapes:***

Historically, there has been an imperative need for governments to adjust to new economic structures, mainly produced by the transition from socialism to a market-orientated system, and from protected to liberalised economies. Peripheral economies consider that a governmental policy is necessary to facilitate the development of strategically competitive capabilities.

Thus, design policies are mainly economic strategies for liberal, market-orientated economic development. The common measures are strengthening the international competitiveness of local products, the endurance of local industries over international competitors, the increase of exports, the creation of new jobs, the generation of business opportunities, and the development of SMEs' design and management skills.

Governments are supporting public and private sectors through design policies by the creation of new types of enterprises, the provision of grants and tax reductions, and the construction of incubators; industry is fostering the internationalisation of brands, promoting R&D programmes, and building local and international communications and cooperation networks. The gradual trend to outsource design represents an opportunity of entrepreneurship in design services.

*The economic factors, international competitiveness and world trade are major drivers for the implementation of design policies. Governments understand that there is a direct relationship between the overall competitiveness of a country and its effective use of design, as the study conducted by the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (2003) shows. On the other hand, the economic factors often overshadow the benefits for society in general, and although many policies mention the social, cultural and ecological benefits that design can provide, these always are secondary targets.*

### ***Ethnoscapas:***

The main resource that makes a design policy function properly is the human capital, so education, development, actions and committed leadership are concerns in design policies. Design communities, organised in associations, institutions, partnerships, etc., communicate the advantages of design thinking, and assist with its application to industry, the government and the society in general.

Cultural identities have been lost in many regions in the face of the modern processes of industrialisation, and design is seen as a tool to recover and revitalise traditions and local industries, in order to convert them into a competitive advantage. Alternatively, crafts and indigenous knowledge are considered the predecessors of design and the source of innovation and design activities for today's industries, generating innovative local brands.

The diversification of consumers and users call for R&D to understand their needs, wants, and lifestyles, while there is a concern to improve the quality of life for all, and to foster design initiatives to include the disadvantaged, isolated and excluded in everyday life. Even so, as mentioned before, the social aspects are secondary concerns in most design policies.

*Although there is a call for a 'design for all', cultural and social capital does not seem crucial to these initiatives. It is quite alarming that the majority of studied design policies lack an interest in ethnic and excluded communities.*

*It is also patent that there are two forces pulling and pushing design policies: one towards a global integration by the creation of networks, collaborations and exchanges, and the other towards a reinforcement of local, regional, and national identities.*

## **Conclusions**

The complexity of the world today seems unmanageable, and this reflects on design practice. Design policies need to structure and foster a climate for the application of design capabilities for the benefit of the society. However, this is not an easy task. As Er (2002) identifies, there are two major problems in the current formulation of design policies: firstly, the narrowing of design policy to the equivalent to design promotion without including the creation and nurturing of design resources and infrastructure, and secondly, the isolation of design policy in relation to other macro and micro government policies in related areas (science, technology, innovation, etc.). This paper adds a few reflections to the table of discussion.

In general, there is a simplistic approach to the binary of local and global in the design discourse, as if they were two separate bodies. However, there is a constant interaction between both – a process that Roland Robertson (1992) calls *glocality*. Trying thus to frame it as two separate entities, with a defined border which allows changing sides at will, is no longer of any use. Much more would be accomplished during policy-making if more dynamic, holistic methods were followed to decide what would benefit the society in general and the specifics of each locality.

From the generalities found in the two references analysed, design policies still have a long way to go before they truly respond to the demands of the new world economy. García Canclini (1995) points out that cultural policies are still made as if economic globalisation and technological innovations are not reorganising identities, values, beliefs, and the ways we relate to each other. Design policies seem to face similar difficulties.

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