



About Trends

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*Ah, the word with which the master
 Makes the broom a broom once more!
 Ah, he runs and fetches faster!
 Be a broomstick as before!
 Ever new the torrents
 That by him are fed,
 Ah, a hundred currents
 Pour upon my head!*

J. W. Goethe, The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Subjective vision

All of us are investigating trends.
 Whether consciously or not, we forecast all the time.

The images we see are not facsimiles of the world around us, but images of the interactions between us and an object, constructed in neural patterns. As Antonio Damasio pointed out, the structure and properties we end up seeing are brain constructions prompted by an object.¹

Our world is the image our brain constructs. We do not know how faithful neural patterns and mental images are relative to the objects they refer to. All our memory - of things, persons, relationships, places, etc. - exists in a dispositional form, waiting to become an image or action. We construct these images in a constant flow of pattern-recognition and memory-retrieval, a flow which constitutes our consciousness. Therefore “imagic”, pre-verbal storytelling is an innate function of the brain, which might be the reason why the movies and TV are so pervasive.

We do not experience the “present” as a singular moment. We can only experience the world around us as a constant flow of image-constructions. Einstein found that the definition of the present varies with the observer and the motion of the observer. With zero spatial velocity we are moving through time at 1 second per second. With the increase of spatial velocity time slows down. Photons have zero time.

The “present” is a mental abstraction² from the constant “storytelling” flow of generated image constructions of the mind. It is the moment when an perception is interpreted, when the *a priori* perception becomes an *a posteriori* perception.

In this flow the smallest interval we can perceive is approximately 1/16 of a second. Therefore single images can be strung together at speeds greater than 1/16 sec to create the illusion of motion.



René Magritte, False Mirror

¹ Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, (London: Vintage Books, 2000)

² Abstraction: from Latin *ab* and *trahere*, “drawing something out” from its context

The process of cognition

In this storytelling flow, the process of cognition, we constantly strive to create meaning. Whenever we perceive, we invoke the records in our memory to create an image. Cognition involves image-making which involves sense-making. We constantly look for patterns to match them with the records stored in our memory. Learning is thus pattern-seeking, understanding is pattern matching, and ideas are the reconfiguration of patterns and the creation of new patterns. In this flow of sense-making recognition comes from (earlier) cognition, and re-cognition conditions cognition. The process of cognising and recognizing is also transformation. Maurice Merleau-Ponty states: “The process of continual repetition and continual change-of-context constituting meaning is interrogatory; it asks again, and finds meaning from the thing as it is experienced”.³ Amos Tversky confirms that the interaction between perceptions and interpretations creates an information flow which in turn modifies interpretations. What emerges is meaning.⁴

We try to make sense all the time. When we see faces and mythical beings in clouds and stars, our pattern-seeking mechanism is at work. Evolutionary psychology found that particular patterns and arrangements which have been significant for our foraging ancestors become “hardwired” through evolution.⁵ Therefore we have a tendency to see human and animal faces and bodies whenever a certain configuration is perceived. As “linguaging” beings we also communicate the states of our sense-making. The idea of a single individual can therefore be communicated to another individual, to a group, and throughout a society, where it is subject to cultural dynamics.

³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964)

⁴ A. Tversky, “Intransitivity of Preferences” *Psychological Review*, Vol. 84,327-352 (1977)

⁵ Cultural change can also be seen as cultural evolution with the evolutionary processes of variation, selection, and extinction. Cultural forms are selected, propagated and conserved through time, while others eventually become extinct. This process can be called “societal selection” in analogy to Darwin’s natural selection, where the interaction of an idea with a societal environment sets up a feedback process where society selects one design over another, depending on how well it solves an adaptive problem.

Elective affinity

Max Weber described this process as “elective affinity”: Ideas are elected by followers if there is an affinity, convergence, or coincidence; they enter a process of routinization, get reinterpreted, and can get discredited unless they point into a direction which various interests promote.

There are constantly tensions between ideas and interests, between internal states and external demands.⁶ In the dynamics of social communication and negotiation societies construct whole “world views”, symbol constructions from ideas, as foundations for cultural forms. Through communication and interaction, similar mental representations and productions, behaviours and artefacts are distributed throughout society. Types of mental representations and public productions that are stabilized through such causal chains are what we define as cultural.⁷

As a continuation of the individual cognitive information flow there are information flows within society, creating and modifying ideas and interpretations, creating friction, attrition, turbulence and perturbations between domains, and leaving enacted traces in the form of cultural production, styles of art, and modes of thinking. Humans act on the basis of their interpretations (ideas) and thus change society and environment.

Two thinkers who had an influence on Max Weber themselves dealt with the relationship between ideas and their results in society: Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Marx.⁸ The ideas of both men - Nietzsche’s “superhuman” and Marx’s “class struggle”- have entered the discourse of society at the turn of the 20th century, finally becoming predominant ideologies of the 20th century.

Marx saw ideas from the viewpoint of their public function – the issue of classes and political parties. In his view, ideas become material forces once they get hold of the masses. For both Marx and Nietzsche, ideas *reflect* and *express* something: For Marx, the

⁶ H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1970), 62

⁷ D. Sperber, “Anthropology and Psychology: Towards an Epidemiology of Representations” *Man* Vol. 20, 73 - 89 (1985)

⁸ Gerth and Mills, *ibid.*

protestant, puritan belief reflects the anonymity of the market; For Nietzsche, Christianity reflects the resentment of the slaves, who “revolt in morals”.

Weber saw that an idea can also evolve into a configuration which narrows the range of other options. He gives as example capitalism, which in history was but one feature, but in the 20th century becomes a pervasive force which increasingly dominates all other spheres of life. A dominant idea has a direct influence on the individual: for instance, Weber noted that in capitalism as the embodiment of rational impersonality, the technical expert is favoured to the disadvantage of the well-rounded humanist.

Living, observing, and forecasting trends

What we usually call trend comes from our own viewpoint within society, where we perceive a certain present state of societal configurations. This is our experienced perception of a current “how one ought to be”.

So being a “social animal” also means to be “in the loop” of society, in tune with the present state of the configuration of ideas in society. Being “trendy” simply means to comply with a present state of idea configurations and categorizations within society.

But a trend can also be described as a trajectory of constantly and dynamically changing configurations within society. We can infer this trajectory within the dynamic change of configurations of ideas (categorizations, stereotypes, issues) through the observation of aspects and their subsequent categorization. We can look for patterns and pattern changes and create a narrative.

A trend as description is an abstracted correlation of perceived patterns and pattern changes within society. In other words, an observed trend is always an invention by the observer. To which degree this invention is a mirror or reproduction of actual flows and contestations in society we cannot know. Ludwig Wittgenstein postulates in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*:

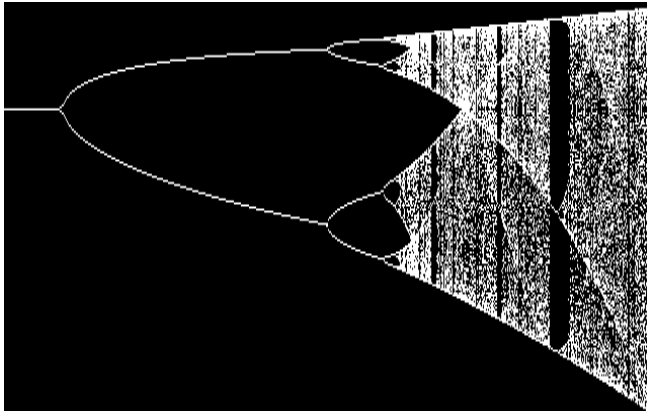
5.1361 We cannot infer the events of the future from those of the present. Belief in the causal nexus is superstition.

Yet we are always forecasting. In the cognitive process of retrieving and cross-checking our memory with what we encounter we also build patterns into the future. If we would not constantly infer into the immediate future, we would be constantly surprised by the present. We could not pursue everyday tasks without this constant forecasting. In the constant flow of generated image constructions of the mind, we predict the present and the immediate future and build expectations from what we have learned. Therefore you are not surprised when the toast you did put in the toaster jumps out nicely baked after 2 minutes.

People are seeking patterns, creating narratives, and inferring into the future in a continuously experienced flow of image-constructions to predict what might happen next. In the process of making sense - retrieving mental constructs and matching them with patterns we perceive - we inevitably project our own beliefs and expectations.

But although all we perceive is a mental construct, there is a correspondence of some of our mental constructs with the order of nature, an insight which is supported by the history of science. Bohr and Heisenberg’s law of quantum indeterminacy does not allow the accurate prediction of future events in atomic and molecular dimensions. But it is also a law of quantum physics that the energy state of a stable system can be determined and calculated with high accuracy.

Societal systems are dynamic and complex and a small change in a system component can lead to a fundamental change of the entire system. This phenomenon can be observed for instance in mathematics. Bifurcation diagrams show that by changing only one parameter, a system can converge to a steady state, it can oscillate between a number of different states, or vary chaotically: Small changes in only one variable can lead to a very different behaviour of the entire equation.



Bifurcation diagram

In biology, a small change in the structure of jaw bones can lead to an entirely new feeding behaviour in the whole species.⁹ Also in physics, small changes can prompt a system to become another system without changing its composition, an effect called phase transition. An example is the emergence of superconductivity in certain metals once they are cooled below a certain temperature.

Our ability to observe trends is directly influenced by complexity: The more we know about the function of something (the toaster) and the less complex the environment in which it operates (your kitchen), the easier it is to predict how something will behave.

Trends through design

The nucleus of a trend is an idea, and this idea is exposed to reinterpretation when traversing different domains of society. Ideas contribute to the way the world is shaped by being enacted. The memory-retrieval process of the individual can involve signs (for instance the knot in the tissue) and is reflected in society: Lev Vygotsky remarked that civilization purposely builds monuments so as not to forget.¹⁰

Hence the products of a society reflect its inner workings. Societal structure determines what is included and what is excluded, or in the example of an industrial society, what is produced and what is not. One way to approach trends in a market-oriented

⁹ Alden H. Miller, "Some Ecologic and Morphologic Considerations in the Evolution of Higher Taxonomic Categories", *Ornithologie als Biologische Wissenschaft*, (Carl Winter Universitaetsverlag, 1949), 84-88

¹⁰ L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978)

society can be to analyse what is *not* on offer and what possible features of a product are *not* present. An example would be the analysis of cars which have been built in communist countries, such as the famous Eastern-German "Wartburg" which was built in reinforced cardboard. The car reflects a minimal-effort and lowest-cost production process without the commercial need of comfort or status.

The difficulty in analysing artefacts and behaviours is that human creations are infinitely intertwined with human action and vice versa. When we analyse a design, where do we start and where do we stop? Take, for example, a website. It is linked to your server and to other sites, but also to the design process for the site, to the educational process that trained the designer, to the evolving structure of global networks, and so on. The act of designing is shaped by the conscious purposes of the designer, but also by the tools used (computers, pen and paper), the communication involved (for instance, the specialist language of computer programmers) and social and psychological factors such as imitation or striving for originality. So any description of a design must be an abstraction from causal chains of artefacts and action and changes of context within these chains. But it is exactly these "cultural causal chains" and changes of context which are at the heart of trends.

The past informs the future

Every occurring change alters the possibilities of future changes. So the past informs and prescribes the space of the possible for the immediate future. It would not have been possible for the internet to become a paradigm-changing communication system if there would not have been the telephone and the computer invented before. Not only previous ideas are a precondition for every new idea, also the social, economic, political and technical environment must be conducive to an idea. Take as an example the story of the mobile phone:

Mr. Ring was working for Bell laboratories in 1947 when he had an idea to solve the problem of limited frequencies on the radio spectrum. Every radio frequency is distinguished from the next by its wavelength. When frequencies are too close to each other, you can hear what is communicated on these other frequencies. Ring overcame this problem by dividing physical instead of radio space. He divided space into small cells with base stations (the phone

antennas we now see on roofs). With minimal power, channels do not interfere with each other: The mobile – or “cellular” phone was invented.

But in 1947 the political, economic, social and technical environment was not conducive to the idea. State-regulated telecommunication monopolies had no interest for networked systems, devices had been clunky as the miniaturization wave from Japan did not start yet, and the social need for a mobile communication device only came about later by a confluence of changing attitudes towards life and work patterns.

Streams and canyons

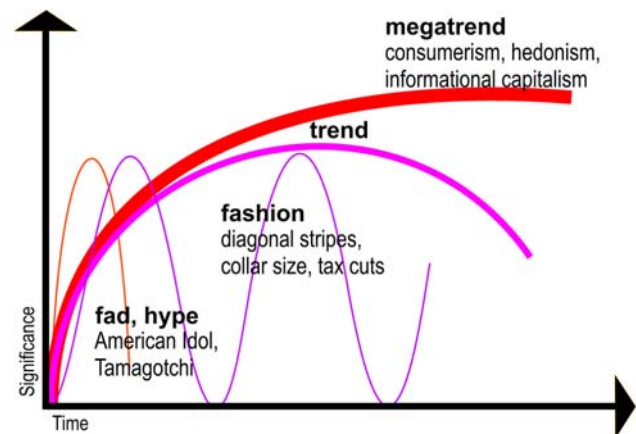


Streams on the beach

The duration and impact of a trend does depend on it's own force and the conditions it meets. When you have taken a walk on a beach sometimes, you might have recognized the little streams which form in the sand when the tide goes out. These streams are constantly remade by external variables such as the composition of the sand and the amount of water flowing through. Other streams are more persistent and fundamentally change the surrounding landscape, just think of the Grand Canyon. Both the volatile beach streams and the Grand Canyon are basically shaped by the same force of water, but the external conditions differ: Sand and recurring tides here, rock and a consistent stream there. The basic ingredients for both are: Time, water, and an environment consisting mainly of silicone. The small streams on the beach have a lifespan of a couple of hours, while the Grand Canyon took 20 million years.

A very volatile trend which dies quickly is usually called a fad or hype, while a very persistent trend is

called a mega-trend. Another form of trends is fashion. The lifespan of fashion is prescribed by a fashion season, recurring within a system in which fashion designers, fashion companies and fashion media are interrelated.



Design – a transmitter system

Why is it possible that we can see in an instant if a chair is from the 1970s or from the 17th century? Because of the style. But how can a style become so dominant that it defines a time?

Humbero Maturana and Francisco Varela found that every system strives to maintain its inner dynamics.¹¹ Design is one sub-system of society which I call a “transmitter” system. The design system consists at its core of designers, design managers, companies, schools, and design media. Through interaction within this system designers grasp current issues and formal ideas and transfer these into their work. Current formal ideas (what is hip and what is not) are imitated, varied and interpreted. This process yields a reinforcement spiral once a critical threshold of followers is reached, and it is kept in its boundaries through feedback from institutionalized system gatekeepers such as the media and production companies. Issues are infused from society, circulated within the design subsystem, and enacted by being made into products.

Within the greater societal landscape of contesting and constantly changing configurations, design has

¹¹ H.R. Maturana and F. J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1980)

the function to encode. It encodes issues into styles and products, which in turn contribute to influence issues. Design is the shaped surface of issues, enacted through products. But also much of what we take for granted exists only because we all agree that they exist. Take for instance justice or fairness. We establish values on matters that relate in large part to the existence and continuing function of the social group.¹² As Humberto Maturana reminds us, Human history has been one of recursive creations of new realities.¹³

The trend domain model

As a part of society we are a part of trends. As innate pattern-seekers we are constantly forecasting. And as observers we can construct trends.

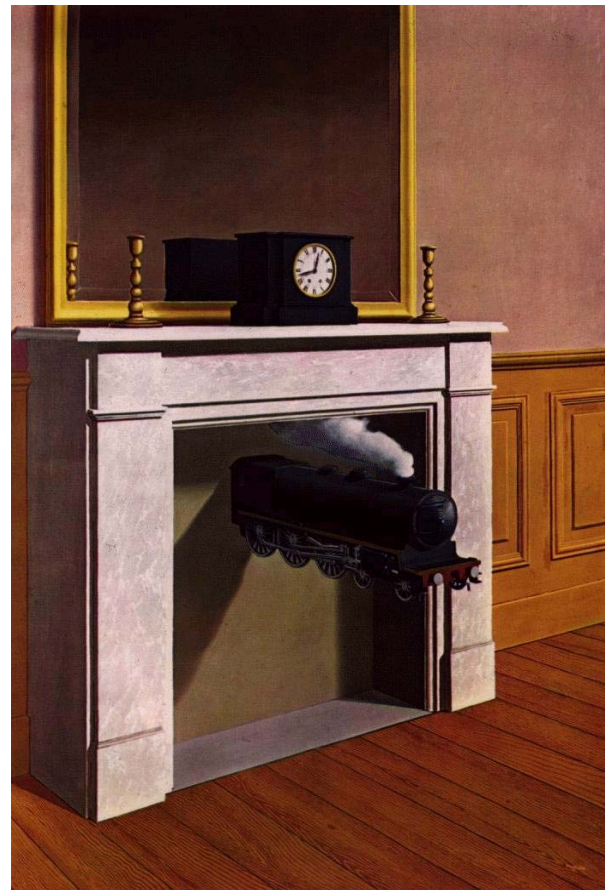
To “live” a trend is effortless. By being a conscious part of a society, a trend is experienced and perceived as a present state of configurations in society. It takes considerably more effort to take the position of an observer and explorer seeking for trends which are of actual relevance. Norbert Elias tells the story of a wise old man who says about time: “When you don’t ask me what time is, I know it. But when you ask me, I don’t know it.”¹⁴ Designers “live” trends more consciously, as it is part of their job to know what is “in”. Designers can always tell you about current trends – which styles, formal ideas, configurations or colours are “in”. These are however not trends themselves, but the visible surfaces of trends. We can compare trends and cultural production with currents and waves in the ocean: We cannot see the current, but we can infer on them by looking at the waves it produces, and we can find out which forces are participating in producing the currents. Similarly we can infer on trends by looking at artefacts, changing behaviours and beliefs, and the societal forces which

¹² John Searle, “The Construction of Social Reality” (1995), in Georg Meggle (ed.), *Social Facts & Collective Intentionality* (Frankfurt: Dr. Hänsel-Hohenhausen AG, 2002)

¹³ Humberto R Maturana, *Ontology of Observing. The biological foundations of self consciousness and the physical domain of existence* (Instituto de Terapia Cognitiva, Santiago de Chile, 1996)

¹⁴ Norbert Elias, *Ueber die Zeit, Arbeiten zur Wissenssoziologie II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988)

shape them. And we can also get carried away in a strong current. We have to be aware that every trend we distinguish is inevitably an abstraction and construction from infinite cultural causal chains.¹⁵ Another pitfall is that due to our innate faculties as pattern-seekers, it is all too easy to see patterns and to deduce connections which are not there. The way we construct trends will therefore make a critical difference. To arrive at a set of information that is useful for strategy and planning, it is necessary to see the big picture first.



René Magritte, *Time transfixed*

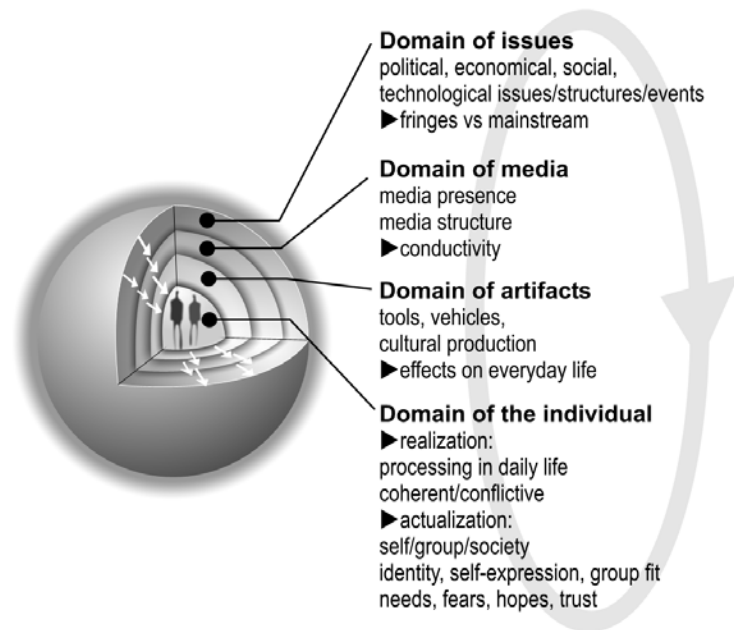
¹⁵ This of course applies to the whole of our knowledge. In *The Savage Mind*, Levi-Strauss writes: “Science as a whole is based on the distinction between the contingent and the necessary, this being also what distinguishes event and structure.”

A trend at a given time is the *Zeitgeist*¹⁶ of that time. By focusing at patterns and pattern changes, we can infer to construct a particular trend and outline future possibilities, also called scenarios. Every scenario consists of the confluence of different factors in one of 3 basic routes:

- A trend continues as it is
- A trend becomes weaker or stronger
- A trend becomes extinct

Made into a model of interaction, the *Zeitgeist* can be mapped out by analysing four main domains, which I have laid out in a “trend domain model” according to their distance to the individual. As guidance for trend investigation, the model can be used for an outside-in as well as for an inside-out investigation to follow trend factors and pathways. Once major factors are described, they can be used as a checkpoint for equating organizational strategy and product development with current trends.¹⁷

The outermost domain of the model comprises concepts and forces that are farthest removed from the will of the individual; the centre of the model is inhabited by individual within his social group. In between are the domain of media and the domain of artefacts as mediums of transmission, mapping and mediating. Looking at society from the outside in, there are dynamically changing configurations, a result of intentions, events and contestations, actualized and realized in society through groups and individuals. These configurations determine societal norms, which in turn determine what is and what is not on offer. When we follow the trend domain model from the outside in, the thrust and transformation of events, agendas, ideologies and technology are described as they reach groups and individuals.



When we look at the model from the core outwards, we follow the individual viewpoint from the inside out and see how in the process of elective affinity individuals and groups realize and actualize the influences of artefacts, media, and issues. These realizations and actualizations influence the domains of artefacts and media and ultimately the outermost domain where politics, economics, and technology are located.

Domain of issues

The outermost layer is defined by its greatest distance to the individual. This is where political and economic powers reside next to knowledge – philosophy, science, and technology. Also events - major political and economic events, natural disasters and wars are located here.

There are numerous individual ideas and group agendas at any given time, but only a tiny fraction of these will become publicly visible enough to be reflected upon by a sufficient number of people. We cannot know which idea in the desk drawer of a scientist or philosopher anywhere on this world will change our lives, but we can look at agendas of principal players - policy makers, corporate leaders, scientists, intellectuals, artists - to find ideas, ideologies, thrusts and power relations.

¹⁶ from German *Zeit* (time) and *Geist* (spirit, but also ghost). The Latin term *Genius Saeculi* (spirit of the time) was used from circa 1450 on as a counterpart to *Genius Loci* (spirit of the place). This *Genius Saeculi* was described by Christian A. Klotz in the homonymous book “Genius Saeculi” from 1760. The German *Zeitgeist* was coined by Johann Gottfried Herder as a reaction to Klotz’ book.

¹⁷ The model is inevitably a simplification; societal domains are intertwined in multiple ways and in social reality not neatly divided, and both their extent and configuration are in constant flux.

The importance and growth potential of an agenda will depend on the quantitative power of influence, on its qualitative compatibility with current major societal paradigms, and the support of the media. In the intersection of power and knowledge, agendas and ideologies emerge.

The agendas of key political and economic players are of course important as these tend to get transported to the consciousness of the individual with greatest thrust. But also alternative ideas and convictions might change the current mainstream by shifts in societal structures, innovations in technology, or changes in economies.¹⁸

The relations between alternative and current mainstream power and knowledge can be mapped by extrapolating possible interactions as absorbing, conflictive or unrelated. Helpful methods here are an analysis of the history and background leading to current ideologies and agendas, media scanning, or Olaf Helmer's cross-impact analysis.¹⁹ Also interesting in this context is the "burstiness" concept of Jon Kleinberg, a researcher at Cornell University.²⁰

He measures the frequency of occurrence of words in defined domains, reflecting which concepts and issues are influential at a given time. Kleinberg has analysed the presidential state of the union addresses since 1790 and found, for instance, that Cuba was mentioned most often between 1897 and 1899 and not during the Cuba crisis, that Japan attracted the most interest during WWII, that the last time France was of interest was 180 years ago, that schools and teachers are topic only since 1996, and that freedom became unimportant since 1992.

¹⁸ An additional effect was observed by French philosopher Gilbert Simondon, in his book *Du monde d'existence des objets techniques* from 1958. He found that technical systems have a prescribed internal dynamics which automatically lead to internal consistency and unification.

¹⁹ Olaf Helmer, "Cross Impact Gaming" *Futures*, Vol 4, No 2, 149-167 (1972)

²⁰ J. Kleinberg, "Bursty and Hierarchical Structure in Streams", *Proceedings of the 8th ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining* (2002)

Domain of media

Ideas, events and agendas are transported and transformed through media. Take for instance 9/11 or Iraq: These events are, in terms of geographical distance, far removed from the everyday lives of most people on the planet. The proximity of the individual to what concerns him is however not a matter of geographical distance, but a matter of the distance the media create between the individual and events.

Advertisements communicate signifiers via already existing referent systems. Branding belongs both to the domain of media and the domain of artefacts. Of interest here is the planned construction between a sign (logo, product) and the signified, reinforced by repetition.

Also the structure of media is changing and itself subject to trends: With "embedded" real-time war reporters on the one side and the individual increasingly devoid of social buffer areas – family, local community – on the other side, people are increasingly directly exposed to media-made reality.

This domain can be analysed by scanning the conductivity of media to different ideas, ideologies and agendas, but also morphologically in regard to the configuration and connections of media. For instance, in the morphology of the Internet, dense cores of interlinked websites are surrounded by less connected ones. There are "information authorities" – sites that receive many links – as well "information hubs", sites with many outgoing links.

Domain of artefacts

The domain of artefacts is of special interest for design management and product development. It is here where latent product opportunities get visible. The interaction between the individual and the environment is mediated by cultural production – tools, vehicles, and artefacts. This domain comprises all artefacts and cultural vehicles which stand between us and the wider environment.

Design and cultural production (contemporary music, music videos, movies, art, advertisement, theatre, literature etc.) makes and mirrors current reality,

creating signification systems and group identities.²¹ Hebdige remarked that a style objectifies the self-image of a group in relation to other groups in objects and activities.²²

One way to enact the realizations of the Domain of the Individual (see below) is by choosing artefacts from within the current prescribed norm of society. Houses and interiors, products, cars, fashion etc. express the place we strive for in society, the values we adhere to, and the hopes and fears which move us. The world of products a person surrounds himself with is reflecting the intersection of what is desirable and what is available. Of special commercial interest here is the investigation of the “blank space” of products which are desirable, but not available.

The focuses of investigation in this domain are the effects on everyday life and perception. Products such as the SUV and environments such as the gated community – the quickest-growing realty sector in America – have become so ubiquitous in everyday environment of Americans that they actively shape behaviour, expectations and perceptions. One explanation for the SUV and gated community trend can be derived from the Domain of the Individual: When fears are strong, the desire for security is growing, and this desire is acted out in the form of products and artificial environments: gated communities and SUV’s are reflecting desires for safety.

This domain can be analysed by deconstructing artefacts and visual analysis. Planned products can be placed inside this layer to position them in design maps and to check its compatibility with current trends. Design maps, visual analogies and metaphors can help to find correlations or contradictions.

²¹ Umberto Eco remarks in his book *On Signs*: “To say that a signification system makes communication processes possible means that one can usually communicate only about those cultural units that a given signification system has made pertinent. It is, then, reasonable to suppose now that one can better perceive that which a signification system has isolated and outlined as pertinent.” According to Levi-Strauss, the object and its meaning constitute a sign whose meaning is construed and ordered in a culture. Style can be explained as a localized expression in partial opposition to another, more powerful society.

²² Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, (London: Routledge, 1981)

Domain of the Individual

The individual within social groups, settings or milieus is located at the core of the model. It is here where issues arrive, mediated through media and artefacts. Here the actualization and realization of current information with established values and beliefs takes place.

In the stage of realization, the coherence of issues with existing values and beliefs is analysed. How are emergent processes and worldviews processed in everyday life – at home, at work, while shopping? People have the tendency to adjust their perception of the world so that it matches to the opinion of their peers. Are personal and group values conflictive or coherent, do they build up a feedback loop, and how are they acted out in everyday behaviour?

In the stage of actualization, the self is observed in its relation to society. Here affective values (needs, fears, hopes, expectations, trust) as well as cognitive values (concepts) are looked at. What happens to identity, orientation, self-expression, or group fit when a certain configuration of issues affects the individual? Are values coherent or conflictive? Also fears are different in different cultures: The difference in fears lies in the difference of perceiving what is threatened, what has to be protected and where a culture locates its abode.

Affective and cognitive values at this level can be processed in behaviours and later become manifest in cultural production through the domain of artefacts. Conflicting values are can also be expressed in substitute acts.

Researching trends

By researching trends, we focus on forces operating in relationship to each other. These forces have to be strong enough and exist over a period of time long enough so that they can become influential, otherwise they are just fads. The formation of trends involves complex interactions, and the common coincidence also plays its part. At the heart of the trend is the individual as part of a society in constant change, influenced by and influencing the everyday production of issues and artefacts. Interactions inform discourses, and discourses are fundamental in organising meaning on a societal level. As socio-

political, cultural and technological discourses shift, meanings and values shift with them. In politics and economy, science and philosophy, media and design current discourses are inevitably informed by older paradigms and ideas. Hence there is always a delay in the transmission activity between domains. Current actualizations in the core domain of the individual can only with a delay lead to new rhythms in societal behaviour and in their representation through artefacts.

The driving force of every human endeavour is an idea of a world which always lies in the future. Everybody imagines the world he/she wants to live in. The question we should ask ourselves is this: Does somebody else imagine this future for us or do we want to imagine it ourselves?

