Master Thesis

Revitalizing a Company Classic
The Story of Revitalizing a Company Classic
Using a practical method of design

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Abstract

The main purpose of this report is to analyze a practical method of design while doing an innovation project connected to a specific armchair. The aim is to re-vitalize the pre-existing product. This project is done within the context of a specific furniture producer. This report describes theories about practical methods of design and how the practical intellect is used in a creative process. It also contains background research about classics. The background research is based on a brief literature review on the subject as well as interviews with professionals within the field of furniture design. A few factors that can be said to characterize what makes a classic are suggested. The development of a specific armchair is described. Earlier projects where practical methods of design have been used are also described. The practical methods of design used in this project are described. The main method for this is making physical models by hand together with hand sketching. The design process of developing a new product is described and discussed. As a final result visualizations and a description of a suggestion of how one can re-vitalize the specific armchair are shown. The outcomes and learning from using a practical method of design are discussed. The final suggestion is
analyzed according to the factors suggested in the background research to characterize what makes a classic.

Key words: furniture design, classic design, practical design, innovation, prototyping

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Introduction

Background
The reason for this study is that I was asked by a furniture producer to work with one of their big selling company classics. I was asked if I wanted to do this after a presentation of my results of re-designing an existing armchair, in a course at the Innovation Master Program at Linnaeus University. The method I had used I called Rapid Serial Prototyping and it is a practical method of design. My background is in the field of furniture design and wood technology. I am passionate about wood and I have some years of experiences from practical woodwork. I was therefore very happy when I got the opportunity develop this method of design even further.

At first hand I wasn't told which product it was that they wanted me to work with, but it was clear that they considered it to be one of their ‘classics’. Later on I found out that it was the armchair called Poäng. The company, IKEA, also wanted me to approach the question of why some pieces of furniture are more successful than others and why some are considered to be classics. “Is it possible to find a truth about what makes a classic?” I thought. “Well I will give it a try!” I will also show in my report how I, as an innovation
designer, work by reflecting on my design process using a practical method of design. I will use others’ views about what a ‘classic’ is as a background and influences for my design process.

In the theory chapter of this report I will describe theories about practical methods of design and how and why practical intellect is used in a creative process. The theory chapter also contains background research about classics. The background research is based on both a brief literature review on the subject as well as interviews. The interviews are made with both professionals internally at IKEA as well as other professionals, directive managers of furniture companies, designers, architects, engineers etc. The main interview question is “What makes a piece of furniture a classic one?” I will also analyze this and suggest a few factors that can be said to characterize what makes a classic. In the last part of the theory chapter I will describe the history of the development of the armchair Poäng.

In the context chapter I describe the context in which this project is done. Earlier projects were practical methods of design have been used will also be described.

In the chapter of project and process I will firstly describe the practical methods of design used in this project. The method for
this is making physical models by hand together with hand sketching.

As my project is both about designing something related to an existing layer glued wooden armchair and to write about how many of the Scandinavian modern furniture is designed, I will put my self in the situation of a real context. This concerns material, aesthetics, function, business, production, testing etc. As I am experienced in practical work and carpentry I find it easier to work with physical materials instead of making digital models. Therefore I have chosen to use a practical method of design in this project. I find that making physical models gives me more truthful answers about what is possible to do.

The next part of the chapter describes the concept and idea generation and I present four different concepts and what concept I chose to develop further. This development is described as the prototyping process, but could also be called a design phase. I will describe how the practical method of design gave me new ideas of how to take my work further and solve problems. Appearance of the model changed many times during this practical reflective work. This gives an understanding of why the idea of simple, unique looking i.e. iconic products is mostly not results of an impulse. It might start with an impulse, but it takes a long time to finish.
What I thought would be the final goal was changing during the project. This project started without a clear idea of what kind of product I was going to develop, but this changed along the way. My design phase of the project started with a process of generating concepts to the context of the specific armchair. As a final result I visualize and describe my suggestion of how I want to re-vitalize the product Poäng. I will also describe what I learned from trying the prototype out in the real context of the home environment.

In the summary and discussion I will reflect and discuss the project as a whole, the method of design and what I learned about using a practical method of design in this project. I will also evaluate the final suggestion according to the factors suggested in the background research to characterize what makes a classic.

Aims and purposes

The main purpose of my thesis is to analyze a practical method of design while doing an innovation project connected to a specific existing product in the IKEA range. I also aim to approach the popular term ‘design classics’ in the context of furniture design, and more specifically Scandinavian furniture design from the 1930’s until today.
I seek to contribute with a documentation of knowledge around the question of how to make good product design and what elements can be said to characterize a classic piece of furniture. The aim for the interviews is to find common and different thoughts about furniture classics among professionals in furniture business and design. Another reason is to get ideas for my case study, and let the background research influence my own design project.

The main reason for using *Poäng* as a case study was that I was asked to do so. Now I ask my self the question how could I contribute to make it better or more contemporary relevant? One way is to show furniture producers how they can use a selling success and build on the concept in a sustainable way, not only to sell more of the same product. Is there a way of adding more value for the person that already has the product? My innovative approach aims to show how an old product can be revitalized. In my design process I seek to show how it can be revitalized in a more long term way. This as opposed to follow the short term trends that for example can be seen in the fashion industry’s way to attract consumers by nourish their need of updating their look and buy a new product for every season. In my design process I seek to do something to revitalize the armchair *Poäng*. I aimed to update the original product or make a new, compatible feature or
product. The aim is that this new suggestion will have a resemblance to the original product or that it will be recognized as related to the original product. If the design would end up being very different in looks or function it would no longer be perceived as compatible with Poäng.

Furthermore I seek to contribute with knowledge about using a practical method if design. I will do this by documenting and describing the design process itself. I aim to evaluate this method to show the benefits of using physical modeling as a part of the creative process.

Finally I aim to evaluate my suggestion for how to revitalize Poäng in the light of the background research about classics.

**Delineation of field of study**

This project is in the field of product design and furniture design. I will focus my research on Scandinavian modern furniture, approximately from the 1930’s and forward. When I did interviews with experienced people in furniture business about classical furniture I noticed that almost everyone was referring to chairs designed by Swedish or Scandinavian designers and why these products are famous. My aim is to point out what furniture classics have in common.
I have chosen to work with appearance and functionality of a product and I will not go deeper into materials and production techniques. This would be a very interesting subject of sustainable development and ecological aspects. Materials that I think could have a great opportunity to be improved in the product Poäng are upholstery stuffing and also glues that are used in wood the production.

As a final suggestion to improve Poäng I will show the concept with a physical prototype. I don’t show any final technical drawings or digital 3D models. The reasons are that my project has the purpose to describe the final concept and the practical method that led to my result. A finished product is not needed to describe this.

**Theory**

In the theory chapter I briefly describe theories about practical methods of design, my background research about classics and the history of Poäng.
Practical methods of design

Practical intellect and tacit knowledge

The practical intellect could be said to be the part of the intellect that is used when doing practical work. The term suggests that it takes qualified mental work to do practical work. In doing practical work a person also uses his or hers tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is not articulated and verbalized. It is something that is common in practical professions and it’s learned by observing others and trying yourself. Tacit knowledge is acquired with personal experience. Some things are very hard to learn by reading about it. Some obvious examples are motor skills like riding a bike or swimming. But there are other knowledge connected to the human senses seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing and feeling that can also be considered tacit knowledge. For example when an experienced carpenter knocks on lumber to hear if the wood is dry enough to use (Göranzon, 2009).

Reflective practice

The American organizational theorist Donald Schön (1930-1997) describes a concept that he calls “Reflective practice”. It has two sub-categories “Reflection-in-action” and “Reflection on action”. The first is an action were reflecting and acting is one act in a real
situation. This is often misunderstood as reflecting at the same time as acting, but Schön suggests that the action is the reflection. That is why he put hyphens between the words.

“Reflection on action” however, is done after succeeding or failing in the act. The concept “Reflective practice” follows the idea behind the expression “Learning by doing” coined by the psychologist and philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952). Schön’s idea is pragmatic. If you want to come up with new knowledge or solutions you have to act in the real situation and adapt your process or method to the specific case, this can’t be done with trying to use a manual that is written in a general way (Schön, 2003). To get a grip on the complex and iterative way of doing design I have Schön’s idea about reflective practice as a guide in my practical design process. Figure 1 shows an illustration of this.

![Fig. 1 Illustration of my design process](image)
I try to do a design work similar to earlier cases of designing Scandinavian furniture classics. I do this in a wood workshop. Further on I add circumstances as material, in this case layer glued wood, aesthetics or a style of a specific chair and stability requirements etc. This will make the situation not very unique, but applying this to another kind of furniture product makes it much more likely to be unique. And I want to make a unique product that could have a chance to set a new standard more fit to modern and flexible living at home. I believe that the idea of Schön goes hand-in-hand with the modernist design idea of “form follows function”. When performing product design it is a process that is designed for the specific case. This is because you can’t in many cases predict how all aspects of the design work together in advance. The only way to predict is to make something very similar to what has been done earlier.

**Form storms**

Schön’s ideas were written before the 3D printing was developed and accessible for designers. This might give the idea of working in the real context as old-fashioned. Paul Backet is a industrial design director of the American design company Ziba Design inc. He has written a series of educational articles teaching product design (Backet, 2016). He states that there are too many glossy
renderings that can’t be produced, in the portfolios of design students that he had seen lately. He further describes a way of working with product design that the company Ziba Design do. It is called “Form storms” and the concept is inspired by brainstorming. A group of designers are brought together. Sometimes clients are invited as well. They start with a design brief. Instead of getting a blank piece of paper they start with a block of hard foam cut in the approximate dimensions of the product being designed. Then the sketching is done in 3D by using knives sandpaper and rasps. It is not needed to get the model very tidy. The designers can build on previous models and try new ways. To sketch with models is iterative in the same way as doing it in 2D. As it is made fast and rough it is easy start over if needed. This 3D exploration is about function as well as form and allows for trying out a mechanism or moving part directly. Backet points out that is a great experience when you can watch the form develop in your hands and that it’s very compelling to have something to hold in your hands that’s as close as possible to the real thing (Backet, 2016).
Background research about classics

*What does ‘classic’ mean?*

This project has one ground in finding elements that could be said to characterize classic furniture. In this project it is defined to be about modern Scandinavian tradition of designing furniture, since the term ‘classic’ has to be delimited to some extent.

To establish a definition for the term classic in the context of modern furniture design (i.e. design classics) it is needed to start with the origin of the word. In ancient Rome the word *classicus* was used to recognize the citizens within the first and the most influential class of the six classes of the Roman citizenry. This classification was supposedly executed by the king Servius Tullius (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016). The Oxford English Dictionary (2016) also suggest a definition of the word ‘classic’ as: "Of the first class, of the highest rank or importance; constituting an acknowledged standard or model; of enduring interest and value". Nationalencyklopedin (2016) suggests the definition “writer or piece of literature that because of it’s enduring value is considered to deserve to be called a classic” (freely translated by the author). Both these definitions include the factors of time and value. Time can be considered an objective factor. “Value” however is a factor that can be considered to be subjective. The
phrasing “considered to deserve” highly suggest that we are dealing with peoples opinions and values. It is not defined who has the mandate to decide what object, author or piece of art deserves to be classified as a classic. The products and pieces of art that are classified as classics, can be said to be part of the canon. Pollock (Pollock, 1999) explains that the canon is texts or objects in literature, art history or music that are considered to be the best, the most significant or the most representative. Canons constitute the backbone of a cultural and political identity. Earlier in history religious leaders and the church defined the canon. In our more secularized society the academic institutions plays a significant role in defining the canon according to Pollock. The academic institutions defines what texts or objects are most representative and what objects need to be studied and used as models by the students and anyone who wants to be considered to be an educated person (Pollock, 1999).

To learn more about classic furniture in this project I have chosen to turn to other professionals. I do this by doing a brief literature review and by doing interviews. At a furniture fair in Stockholm several interviews were performed with CEO’s and design managers at Swedish furniture producing and manufacturing companies. The interviews semi-structured and I used the
question “What makes a piece of furniture a classic one?” as a start. I had also prepared some alternative ways to ask the same question. One interview was performed on telephone at another occasion. Most of the interviews were recorded if the person allowed it, if not notes were taken. Later I used the same interview method with IKEA seniors or retired managers.

What do professionals in furniture design say about classics?

The Scandinavian modern furniture is a style described in various artistic literature as furniture designed by persons from Denmark, Sweden, Finland and sometimes from Norway. Finland is not geographically belonging to Scandinavia, but in this context it is an important nation of the style.

Elizabeth Wilhide is a writer and co-author of several appreciated books about design and interior architecture (Wilhide and Sjöwall Trodden, 2009). Wilhide explains that Scandinavian design from the 20th century is focused on function and expresses a simple, unpretentious and more democratic way of life. At the same it has extraordinary qualities compared to other 20th century design that has given the Scandinavian design a classical status and great influences within architecture and design.

The style has its origin in modernism from the early 20th century and is still relevant. A significant is that the furniture was
functional, with few elements or parts and often without decorations. However the shapes and materials are more organic and related to nature than for example the more industrial style of the German Bauhaus School. Scandinavian design is known by following the modernistic motto “form follows function”. One crucial reason to the style is that the tradition of craftsmanship never disappeared totally as a cause of the late industrial development compared to other western countries. The Scandinavian designers didn’t contradict industrial production and craftsmanship, but the sense of using the material in a traditional way is cared about. One important cause of using material economically is that people in Scandinavia were used to live with little resources in a cold and unfriendly climate and have learnt how to make the most out of the limited resources they had. This led to practical thinking of how to waste as little as possible (Wilhide and Sjöwall Trodden, 2009).

Dieter Rams is an industrial designer and was chief of design at Braun for approximately 30 years in the later half of the last century. He designed a diverse range of products. He has set up 10 principles of good design (Maiden, 2011). These principles are not specific for furniture and are not to define classics, but could be used in this context as well.

1. Good design is innovative.
2. Good design makes a product useful.
3. Good design is aesthetic.
4. Good design makes a product understandable.
5. Good design is unobtrusive.
6. Good design is honest.
7. Good design is long-lasting.
8. Good design is thorough down to the last detail.
9. Good design is environmentally friendly.
10. Good design is as little design as possible.

Many of dieter Rams principles can be found in descriptions of Scandinavian classics. For example (Jönsson and Liljedahl, 2005) discuss what makes piece of furniture timeless. To live through the times it should give a feeling of obviousness, not strained, pushed or over-analyzed. It should be designed from the soul of the creator with unique, strong charisma. Further on, it should radiate integrity, beauty, independence and you should feel that it has some kind of personality that has something extra. It could also be a case of a design for a special purpose or a particular need. The authors also discuss what characterizes the designer of a piece of furniture that becomes a classic. They state that it is a matter of obsession and diligence and that a burning interest is needed. The quick impulse is a myth (Jönsson and Liljedahl, 2005).
This could be seen as another way of saying that the designer genius is a myth. Maybe this is the reason why some designers often are doing many versions of their own designs or others earlier work in the pursuit for a better product. This could be seen in the work of Arne Jacobsen (1902-1971), the chair *The Ant* (Jacobsen et al., 2010), Yngve Ekström (1913-1988), the armchair *Lamino* (Ekström and Sällberg, 2007), and Alvar Aalto (1898-1976), *Chair 406* (Kellein, 2004). They (or the company behind) have made classical furniture and also made several commercialized versions of the same concepts. This might even be a way to get the attention in the public and promote the design consciously or unconsciously. Another scenario is that a design could become famous a long time after the launch. Peter Torstensson\(^1\) (second generation, CEO of the Swedish furniture company Mitab) tells some of his own requirement for a classic furniture. He reflects that a classic is something that adds something new; it could be an aesthetic detail, a technical solution or a function. It could be a material that makes a product a classic, a new material or an old but new in the specific context. He gives an example, the chair with seat and backrest made out of concrete, designed by Jonas Bohlin. He reflects that this might be a

\(^1\) Peter Torstensson, Interview at Stockholm Light and Furniture Fair, Älvsjö, 2016-02-11
case of getting attention of journalists, or critics polarized opinions. It could become a classic because it is hated or because that people loves it. He further describes a thinkable scenario. He describes that a good product designed by an unknown designer could be brought to attention and gain classical status several years later. If the same designer makes other things for another company that get very much attention in media or becomes a selling success at the time, this could bring his or hers early work to attention and can become a great success¹.

What Torstensson says about how a product can reach classic status, when the designer himself becomes famous also shows that the designer behind the product plays a role in the status of the product. Torstensson doesn’t give a real example, but I find his story as a possible real scenario. As for the company it could be seen as a case of luck when they get a piece of another company’s success. It is also of course a product that is well designed and approved by the company, but in this case the company has not worked much to promote it, so that is the lucky part. Another real case Torstensson reflects on is the chair called Concrete and is an example of a new designer’s of the 1980’s, “lucky start”. The chair seems designed to be more of a sculpture than comfortable chair. It was a degree project at Konstfack and the furniture company Källemo saw the potential and made it an investment object by
producing it in 100 numbered copies (Fredlund and Lindberg, 2006). A crucial reason to the designer’s fame is due to this chair and he has done much more functional design after this. The situation in furniture companies now is that famous designers or design companies are used in co-design projects. This could be one way to get attention in mass media.

Johan Lindau² (owner of the Swedish furniture company Blå Station) explains his view about furniture classics and that he would in a contemporary context call it Icons. He mentions several times “to set a new standard”. He gives an example of his company’s products that has been successful for 15 years. It is a chair with a combined surface called Innovation C (fig. 2). It was designed for airports, but work in other contexts very well, he says. He explains further that you can’t design for what is “now”. He often uses test groups in the age of 12-20 to figure out future users behaviors. He mentioned another product called Wilmer T (fig 3). This is an armchair with two small surfaces and one of them can be turned over the lap.

Johan Lindau explains that their products are not made to sell to the private market. But he is convinced that this concept is very suitable for modern living. He tried Wilmer T at home and the

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² Johan Lindau, Interview at Stockholm Light and Furniture Fair, Älvsjö, 2016-02-11
younger members of the family use them all the time. Also when launching a product that could set the new standard, it could be crucial that the company behind it has a well-known and clear identity. This makes it more likely to get people to stop and watch to give time to understand the product, he explains. Further on he says, people are very anxious when it comes to making their own decisions. This is why a company’s identity has to be clear to guide people. Also the designer needs the company’s identity. A company’s identity has to be clear and present all the time. This is important work. “A designer can become tired now and then, but the company can not”.
Kersti Sandin Bülow\(^3\) (Furniture designer and Professor, Carl Malmsten Furniture Studies, Linköping University) reflects that furniture classics must be divided into subcategories. Iconic designs, Classics, and Selling success she suggests. It is people in different categories of persons who approves what is what. People of the art-elite approves what is Iconic, a bigger group in society, the culture interested middle-class approves what is a Classic. Sandin Bülow explains that a significant of this group of people could be academics like librarians, teachers or nurses. A selling success is approved by selling figures of course, she states. The company Norrgavel can be an example of what is approved by cultureinterested middle-class people (fig 4 Länstol). This category is important to have in mind if making a product that will be in the market for a long time and also achieve a higher status. Another example is the armchair Lamino (fig 5). Lamino is successful in all three subcategories. Another aspect is to design a

\(^3\) Kersti Sandin Bülow, Phone interview, 2016-02-29
product with charisma, but is very difficult to achieve as a strategy. Sandin Bülow says about charisma “I can’t tell how to make it- you just see it in peoples eyes”.

Charisma could be related to aesthetics. According to Dieter Rams aesthetics is an attribute of a designed object that has a positive effect on it’s thought user (Maiden, 2011). Maiden discusses that aesthetics might be what makes the user happy and proud to use or own the product. Sandin Bülow, Rams and Maiden all describe this as features of an object that make people feel something.

Fig. 4. The company Norrgavel’s “Länstol”, www.http://norrgavel.se/mobel/lanstol/2016-02-29

Fig. 5. “Lamino” http://www.swedese.se/kollektion/fatoljer/lamino/2016-02-29
Sonnie Byrling⁴, CEO Swedese AB, (20 years as CEO in other design related companies) states that a classic piece of furniture should be liked at the time it is launched to the public. It doesn’t have to be popular or liked for a very long time at first. It has some kind of well-being factor. Form, function and material durability are some basic things. Genuine materials are important aspects. It is said that it helps us (people) to feel good. A furniture piece should age in a dignified way, this often requires high quality materials. Materials should be tactile. This makes people feel good.

Honesty about the construction is also important. People should understand how the parts are put together. It is also a celebrity-factor involved, many people has to be able to see it. It is not the design by it self that makes the classic, it is the cross-functional co-operation that creates the classic, all categories.

Summary and analyses of literature review and interviews about classics

In the literature review and the interviews a lot of different aspects and elements are discussed. I have categorized these factors into four broader factors shown below.

⁴ Sonnie Byrling, Interview at Stockholm Light and Furniture Fair, Älvsjö, 2016-02-11
1. *Time and Quality*

2. *Form and Function*

3. *Identity and Acknowledgement*

4. *Charisma and It*

*Time and Quality* – many of the subjects mentions time as an important factor. The product has to be durable and last for generations to be considered a classic. To ensure that product stands the test of time it has to be made with high quality and lasting materials, materials that are genuine and that feels good. The product has to be sustainable in the way that it will last for a very long time so that it has the chance to survive the generation that used them for the first time. But surviving isn’t enough. It also has to be appreciated for many years and by coming generations.

*Form and Function* – A classic is described to have a simple form, that is unpretentious and without unnecessary decorations. It’s usually organic in its form, which also connects to the factor of standing the test of time. Nature never goes out of style. Furthermore the aesthetics of a classic often has some obviousness about it. It’s easy to understand and there is honesty about the construction. This factor might be true especially for the Scandinavian classics.
*Identity and Acknowledgment* – To be elevated and classified as a classic a product has to be acknowledged and many people has to see it. The identity of the designer and/or the company behind the product is therefore an important factor. The product takes on the identity of the designer and the company. The identity of the product also affects what kind of classic the product might be subcategorized as. The identity of the company and the target group for the product might define what socio-economic group takes the mandate to approve or not approve on the classical status of the product. A product designed by a company that targets the art-elite might be closer to be considered iconic, while the same product, if designed by a company who can keep the price down and reaches a global market, might have a better chance of becoming a selling success. Of course this could change over time. What has been a selling success might be picked up by the culture-interested middleclass or art-elite and considered to be a classic at another period of time.

*Charisma and It* – This factor has to do with the character and the personality of the product. The uniqueness, that something extra that makes the product stand out among other products. Charisma has to do with aesthetics. This is the factor that is very difficult to control and to verbalize. You have to observe users to be sure.
Maybe this is where the tacit knowledge of the designer is expressed.

Poäng, a company classic

*The development of Poäng*

To learn about the history of and the early development of this armchair I performed interviews with senior or retired IKEA co-workers that were involved in some way at an early stage of the development and an crucial re-design period of the product. Also a person with retail experience from the time when the armchair was launched was interviewed. I prepared about twenty questions in writing and in three out of four cases I managed to send them to the person a day or two in advance before I met them one by one in person. I also talked to everyone in advance on the phone describing my project. All interviews were recorded. Based on the interviews and documents such as a video, images and texts from the IKEA catalog a historical review is summarized in the following text.

The project started in 1975 by Lars Engman, who was a newly recruited product manager at the time. The designer is Noburo Nakamura who was employed by Ikea. The first version of *Poäng* was called *Poem* and was launched in 1977. After nearly 40 years *Poäng* is one of the most long lived selling success in the IKEA
assortment (Bengtsson, 2010). Lars Engman\textsuperscript{5} tells the story of the development of this success.

It started with the idea to make a layer-glued armchair in a Scandinavian style. A strategy to get the best price offer from the suppliers was to break down the construction of the product and divide it into parts that could be delivered from different suppliers. It was to prevent the sub-suppliers to figure out the total cost of the product and by doing so get a better price offer. This led to an armchair that is made of bent layer-glued wood for the stand, tubular steel for the sitting basket that would be covered with a fabric that holds the weight of the sitter. On top of the fabric there is a separate filled cushion.

Bent layer-glued wood is made by pressing thin layers of wood, veneers, with glue in between them in a mold with the wanted shape (Stevens and Turner, 2008). Ricky Ericsson\textsuperscript{6} explains how this is done when making \textit{Poäng}. With applied heat and high pressure the shape is permanent within some minutes. After this the material needs to harden for some hours with supports to keep the shape. The technique allows for making broad pieces of

\textsuperscript{5} Lars Engman, Product manager (1975-1988) and Design Manager (1997-2006) IKEA of Sweden, Interview, Älmhult, 2016-03-04

\textsuperscript{6} Ricky Ericsson, Engineer IKEA of Sweden, and original constructor of \textit{Poem}, Interview, Älmhult, 2016-02-23
the shape wanted, that can be sliced in several identical shaped pieces. These pieces are finished individually. The pieces need to be paired from the same block, because each block will have slightly different qualities when dried. Stevens and Turner (2008) describes that it is possible to make bends in solid wood as well, but it needs more and longer use of steam and heat to make the material soft enough. It also demands higher quality on the wood, small knots or disturbances in the solid wood will make the material break in the process. It is therefore more material waste to use solid wood. When using thin layers of veneer only the visible layers of the material needs to be perfect. The inner layers don’t have the same high requirements when it comes to the looks and defects of the structure.

Noburo Nakamura is a Japanese furniture designer educated at Konstfack in Stockholm and Carl Malmsten school. He was very influenced by the Scandinavian and Northern modern furniture designers as Bruno Mathsson (1907-1988) and Alvar Aalto. He was employed at Ikea from 1973 to 1978, after that he worked as a freelancer for a while and later started a design company of his own in Japan where he is living.\footnote{Ricky Ericsson, Engineer IKEA of Sweden, and original constructor of Poem, Interview, Älmhult, 2016-02-23}
The armchair was called POEM from the launch in 1976 and could be seen in the IKEA catalog for the first time in 1977 (IKEA Katalog, 1977). In 1992 the name was changed to Poäng due to the change of construction, from tubular steel to a wooden, layer glued sitting basket. This was now possible as an effect of lower prices from veneer supplier 8. Customer complaints about assembly of the sitting basket and decreased comfort caused by the canvas that sagged over time was also a cause of the change 9. Tomas Paulsson 10 explains that the idea was to make a more valuable product for the customer, but keep almost the same price as earlier. After launching Poäng the sales increased substantially compared to the previous Poem. The price changed from 1195 SEK to 1290 SEK after this change (IKEA Katalog 1991 and IKEA Katalog 1992, see fig 6).

The chair has been a constant case of changes when it comes to the upholstery part. Also other kinds of layer glued armchairs had the same name Poem. An example is a swivel version, shown in IKEA’s catalog from 1980. See fig. 6.

8 Tomas Paulsson, former Product Manager and strategic manager solid wood, IKEA of Sweden, Interview, Älmhult, 2016-03-04
9 Ricky Ericsson, Engineer IKEA of Sweden, and original constructor of Poem, Interview, Älmhult, 2016-02-23
10 Tomas Paulsson, Interview, Älmhult, 2016-03-04
Analysis of the history of Poem and Poäng

The chair is considered as an IKEA classic, because it has been a selling success for a long time. It doesn’t seem to have the status of an Iconic product. I have not seen many descriptions of it in mass media, design- or artistic publications and literature. Poem is
mentioned in “Svenska stolar”, a book about Swedish chair (Gordan, 2009). I think that the iconic status is hard to get in this case because the design is built upon similar earlier designs too near in time. In this case the 1930’s and 1940’s with G. A. Berg’s (1891-1971) Patronen (fig 7) and Alvar Aalto’s Chair 406 (fig 8) made with the same kind of layer-glued wooden stands. It might have been a different case if the influences were from another century or another kind of product.

![Fig 7. Patronen, G.A. Berg](https://auctionet.com/sv/422455-fatolj-patronen-gustaf-axel-berg-1940-tal)

![Fig 8. Chair 406, Alvar Aalto](http://www.artek.fi/products/armchairs/33)

The identity of the chair is the flexible stand. Other versions of the chair without flexibility have been on the market, but not very
successful sellers according to Lars Engman. However now it exists a rocking version of the chair. This was shown the first time in IKEA’s catalog in 2010. It is a more complex construction with more parts. With this version of Poäng you could come to a conclusion that the core value of the concept is constant but self-controlled motion that is said to be calming. The flexible stand also comes to attention while sitting down and makes less impact on the body. The construction is in a way challenging and raises the critical question of if it will break or not. My company supervisor explained that there has been a reaction among many people that they think it will break. This is also a big part of the identity of the armchair. It differentiates it from a traditional rocking chair, not only by the looks of it. Nowadays it is a more familiar construction and people are used to it so the effect is not probably the same as it was in 1977 when POEM was a newly released product, or in the 1930’s when the same idea of flexible stand was done by Alvar Aalto.

11 Lars Engman, Interview, Älmhult, 2016-03-04
Context

To collaborate with a specific company

This project is done in collaboration with the company IKEA of Sweden (IoS). IoS is a part of IKEA that develops and designs the products and concepts for the whole organization. IKEA is a Swedish company, producer, developer and retailer of products related to the life at home. IKEA sells their products worldwide in their own stores and on-line. The assortment consists of about 9500 products. Examples of products are furniture, kitchen equipment, toys, textiles and interior decorations. IoS is situated in the small town of Älmhult in southern Sweden and has more than a thousand employees. IKEA has a motto that is “To create a better everyday life for the many people”. The foundation for the IKEA design is the Scandinavian functionalism and modernism. The assortment is a mix of long-lived and short-lived products and about 20-25 % of the products are changed every year. When it comes to furniture IKEA aims for more long-lived and durable products, while textile, lamps and interior decoration are more short-lived. IKEA has a very broad target group for their products. The product range is more focused on people that want to buy well designed, functional, low price products for their home, than on luxury items. IKEA owns many manufacturing units that supply
the organization with materials, components and fittings. They also have an aim to work closely with external manufacturers. This can in some cases be to help manufacturers to invest in machinery and sometimes whole manufacturing units. This gives IKEA a big advantage to compete with other mass producing companies in similar business when it comes to the price (Atle Bjarnestam, 2013; Inter IKEA Systems BV, 2011).

A project done in collaboration with a company is of course affected by the context of that company. IKEA is a Scandinavian company and most of the furniture design within IKEA can be said to follow the Scandinavian tradition of furniture design. This points out the direction for the design in this project as well. Furthermore IKEA’s values of making well-designed, functional products at an affordable price can also be said to constitute the context for this project. The target group for IKEA is the many people and the target group for this design project is therefore set.

The fact that IKEA is a mass production company also affects this project. Designing for mass production constitutes both limitations and opportunities. The limitations can for example be that one should try to make a design that doesn’t require to many different manufactures and sub suppliers. Several manufactures and sub suppliers could mean more transports, more complicated logistics and is both time and energy consuming. The benefits of
designing for mass production can be that one is more challenged work with simpler forms that together creates something unique, useful and attractive.

Earlier works using practical methods of design

It’s hard to find academic reports on how others have used practical methods of design. Maybe it’s part of the nature of practical design that the designer doesn’t verbalize and write down this part of his or her design process? This way the tacit knowledge remains tacit. However we can fantasize that many famous designers have used a practical method of design. For example it is said that Bruno Mathsson sat down in the snow to come up with the form of his famous chair (Bruno Mathsson International AB, 2016). Many famous designers of furniture are also educated carpenters. Yngve Ekström, Bruno Mathsson and Hans Wegner (1914-2007) to mention a few (Wilhide and Sjöwall Trodden, 2009).

There are however some interesting descriptions of the how one can use a practical method of design. Paul Backet (2016) describes how he and some colleagues used the practical method of form storming described earlier in this report. The task was to work out a bicycle sidecar concept using things and materials they had at hand. Using a wooden board as the base, attaching wheels
with an axle of a plastic tube and a bucket built up with white foam on top. Backet describes that using this method allowed them to quickly realize that the construction would hold and it led them to add a second stabilizer arm using duct tape. When they had the prototype ready they could quickly try it out and ride it around. In just one afternoon the group of designers had transformed an idea for a prototype, tried it out and adjusted it accordingly (fig 9).

I have myself used practical methods of design in earlier projects. In one project I was to re-design the Lamino armchair by Yngve Ekström and still is manufactured by the company Swedese. I
used a fast prototyping method with an aim to reach many variants of the armchair in a couple of days. As a starting point the curves of the side view of Lamino’s seat and backrest was copied and used to make a mold. It was made smaller than real size, in scale 1:6. This scale was used for two reasons. One reason was to make it quick by hand, with simple tools and thinner and less material. The other reason was that a manikin doll made in scale near to 1:6 of a human could be used to visualize and try out the different models. The mold was made out of a block of Styrofoam. The copied curve was made by using a digital 3D-modell from Swedese’s company website. To get it in scale 1:6 and the right view it was reworked in Rhinoceros 3D-drawing program. The front view of the seat was estimated from the scaled down drawings and interpreted in a flat shape using the measurements of the wideness of the front end of the seat, further on the widest point of the seat surface and the wideness of top of the backrest surface. The length of the piece was measured with a measure tape. A paper template was made using the measurements and then copied to the final seat/backrest material. A PVC-plastic sheet material was used as the material for the seat/backrest. It was heated with a heat gun for some minutes to make it soft enough and was then applied on the mold to get the right shape. In this way many copies could be made in a day. The PVC
seat/backrests was then used to apply ideas how to re-design the armrests and legs of the armchair. This was an aim to see how and if it will become something that would look “new” but still keep the good ergonomics of the Lamino. This process is shown in figure 10. Additionally a more detailed version the backrest/seat was made to demonstrate the look of using the original materials of Lamino. The materials simulated were wood, and off-white sheep fur. The construction was also assembled more like the original with several components. This was to get more practical learning about the original construction. The reason to all this was to give an idea of how much the re-designed parts will change the perception of the whole furniture.
Since there aren’t that many articles that describe earlier projects where practical methods of design are used I hope that this project will be a contribution to the knowledge of how a practical method could be used, verbalized and documented.
Project and Process

Methods

*Sketching by hand*

Fast sketching was done as soon a new idea came up. Most of the sketches are used as depicted memory notes and not used for documentation or visualizing to others. However conceptual and more developed sketches are used for documenting the process.

*Rapid serial prototyping*

This is a method that I worked out and that is similar to what Paul Backet describes as “form storms” Backet (2016). I was not aware of his work or any other name for it at the time. Rapid serial prototyping should not be mixed up with the term “rapid prototyping” that is often related to digital 3D models that could be 3D-printed. It is quite the opposite. I use this method in the earlier educational re-design project described previously.

In the design phase I will use rapid serial prototyping for idea generation and visualization. This method is used in this project to experiment and embody concepts. This helps in the iterative process to evaluate three design aspects: appearance, function and construction issues as stability, strength and production
costs. This was performed at my home and in a wood workshop environment at IKEA of Sweden. The materials are chosen at the instant and what seems most time-efficient. The idea is that you use what you got at hand to build something that could give a result that answer your question or questions. Sometimes several questions can’t be answered at the same time an example is that shaping the prototype is conflicting with the material at hand. In this case you have to think: is this material used and shaped earlier by others in the same way. If another material that can be shaped instantly is used that is less durable the real material can be imagined how it will act, if having a material sample or asking an expert. In this way you can continue to prototype and work with functional aspects as ergonomics, and aesthetics.

Concepts, Idea generation and sketches

What different kinds of changes can be made and motivated? It can be changing the appearance in small thing or in a more major way. I wanted to make attempts that adds value but doesn’t need a change of the already existing product. Therefore I made some sketches of accessory products.

Another way to think is to add another version of the same kind of furniture but in a different price range. Ikea already has a cheaper version of Poäng. A more exclusive version could be a way to take
more shares on the market of layer glued armchairs. Another way to go is to refine some of the details that I find a little disturbing, a brief re-design of the details in the construction.

*Concept 1.*

This is an idea of an alternative accessory of the armchair. This is more suitable for a small space. The foot rest is not in the way if not being used. This is a way to adapt the product for modern living in small spaces and still keep maximum comfort. Also the aim is to make a low tech construction that is not easily outdated (fig 11).

*Fig. 11 Concept 1*
Concept 2.

This is about small changes and to make the “cheap version” more dignified by putting more effort in the “necessary bad”. During internal interviews it was not an easy task to do a version without visible screws or the safety piece. So maybe they instead should be remade with some more love (fig 12).

Fig. 12 Concept 2
Concept 3.

This is a concept of modern living (fig 13). An accessory product to Poäng that brings more value to the product you already have or the one you are buying. This is something that I find sustainable in matter of mass consumption. A turnable surface that can be used for different purposes such as eating, drinking or working. The additional surface can for example be used to keep drinks away from electronics. This kind of furniture also allows a more flexible way of organizing the furniture in a room.

Fig. 13 Concept 3
This concept is influenced by the *Wilmer T*, earlier discussed in this report (see figure 3). In the advertising of the *Wilmer T* I could read that the lower surface is designed as a stool as well as a table. This is making the furniture even more multifunctional.

**Concept 4.**

This is a sketch showing a different way of making a similar silhouette as *Poäng*, but with a different construction (fig 14). The difference is that the sitting curve and the stand are in one piece. The long continuous curve of layer glued wood makes it more unique. This design might be considered as a product under a new name. The idea is to add a new member to the *Poem/Poäng* family.
to make a more exclusive design and to target costumers that are willing to pay for a more expensive product. To have more “members of the family” might be positive when you display the products in the store and catch the interested of the consumers.

The chosen concept

After a discussion with my supervisor at the company (a product developer in livingroom furniture) I decided to go further with concept about modern living, concept 3 (fig 13). The reason is that I believe that this is the most sustainable way and at the same time innovative in a business perspective. Sustainable in the way that it is not needed to buy a new chair to get the new function, it is energy saving in many ways. At the same time it gives good business opportunity to the company to sell to new costumers and customers that already owns the chair. Another reason is that my supervisor also thought that it is good and innovative idea. The company has no earlier similar product in the range.

The basic function in the concept is comfortable, easy access and use of artifacts while sitting. Two separate surfaces are ready to use near the sitting position. One surface could be positioned over your lap as comfortable as possible. Here the user gets support using computer, writing or even eating. The other surface is giving possibilities to keep for example beverages away from electronic
equipment, such as a laptop computer or mobile phones. This is to avoid damaging the devices if spilling out. Of course this product should allow the user to chose how to arrange for him or her self as freely as possible. It should be multifunctional yet simple to understand and use.

The prototyping process

I started my prototyping or modeling with the idea of an attached accessory to the existing armchair, as my concept sketch shows earlier in the report (see figure 13). This would be a good way to use the armchairs construction to avoid additional features to the floor surface of the room, to save space. However will it go along with the rocking movement of the chair or not? To try this out I first used the armchair Poäng and taped a piece of wooden rod vertically on the vertical part of the armchair’s stand near an already existing screw that could be used to attach the feature. The upper end of the rod was about ten centimeters above the armrest. A round surface made out of carton was attached on top of the rod (see figure 15). I placed a glass of water on top of the

Figure 15
surface and sat down and found out that my idea that is shown in the sketch (figure 13) is not going to work, because I couldn’t feel relaxed while avoiding the glass to drop to the floor. The only part of the armchair that is not flexing is the points of the stand that is in contact with the floor, the very ends of the lower part of the stand. Here is where the side tables must be attached. Luckily there are already screw joints used for the assembly of the chair in this area of the stand.

I started doing new sketches, having harmony with wooden curves of the armchair and functionality in mind. With this idea I started to prototype in the company’s prototype workshop. My idea is to design this feature to be made of the same kind of material as the armchairs stand is made of. To be able to do this faster than making it in the real material I used a plastic material instead. I used a 19 mm plastic sheet material that I cut in stripes about 65 x 1500 mm in size. These stripes represented the layer glued wood. The plastic can be shaped and reshaped at a temperature around 120 degrees Celsius. I heated this material with a heat gun and shaped it using

Fig. 16
similar sizes of radiuses as used in the design of the armchair's stand. I shaped a stand for two side-table surfaces that could be attached as easy as possible by a customer (see figure 16). I was not satisfied with the result. The shape of it was good, but attaching it to the chair didn't look good. It became clumsy on one side. I tried to attach the table stand with distances in between the chairs stand, to give a lighter impression, but it didn’t work. It got a too dominant impression. I could see and feel that this construction would become to flexible sideways without more stabilizing material. This would be very hard to look in harmony with the chair. I had to rethink and I dropped the idea of the attached side table.

Now I started to work with an idea of separate furniture not attached to the armchair. I kept the original concept about near and comfortable access. I wanted to keep the idea of two surfaces. In a discussion with my company supervisor we came to a conclusion. Now I have an opportunity to design something that could function outside the context of the specific chair, it could be used as side-table to other sitting furniture. Our discussion was also about the height of the surfaces. Surfaces that are below 600 mm and are inviting to sit on have to meet the requirements for stools. Therefore it has to be tested to stand the load and stability requirements as being a stool. This gave me the idea of designing
the low surface to actually be used as sitting furniture. This could be used in many different contexts. One example is when having a more intimate face-to-face conversation with the person sitting in the chair. I still wanted to keep the original concept about access, comfort, and layer glued wood. I think that the starting point about designing for the armchair Poäng is a good thing that adds a story to the product a history or something you might call charisma or soul. This is one reason why I still wanted to use the material layer-glued wood for the main construction. Another technical, rational alternative could be to use steel tubes. If making this in a way that many people find attractive by cost and looks it has great potential to become a unique, timeless and multifunctional furniture. It goes along with the modern fluid home and also the working life that is becoming more and more common now. I believe that the use of a well-developed production technique will result in a product that makes the price attractive to the customer. I continued shaping new pieces of plastic stripes and after a day I had a new prototype. I showed it to other senior workers at the company and to my
supervisor and got positive feedback.

Still I wasn’t satisfied. It was too big in size and dominating the armchair. It had to be less in attention (see figure 17). To continue this idea I had to find out if I could use a slender or less material to the stand that can hold the weight requirements on the lower surface. I did different attempts to rearrange the parts by playing around with them. The results are shown in figure 18.

![Fig. 18](image-url)
I also had to make a mock-up in real layer-glued wood that could be tested with weights. To do this I used a single layer-glued stand from a Poäng chair and screwed two surfaces to it and also a wooden board to make it stand by itself (see figure 19). Then I contacted testing engineers at the company that helped me to do some basic stability tests. I did this primarily to get an idea of what is possible to do. After the tests I got some clarity. I had to focus first on stability. The material can take the loads required, but the construction was flexing too much so that it tipped over. I had to do a design with shorter levers for the loads.

Fig. 19
I made new hand sketches to find a shape I liked and the next day I made a new prototype (see figure 20). I took two parts of layer-glued wood bent in the shape of the letter C, but more squared and leaning. To do this I used parts from another product, the foot rest that is compatible with Poäng. I adjusted it to approximately the sizes I needed. Using this instead of plastic gave me more answers about how stability would be in reality and at the same time I got a good form to experiment with.

![Figure 20](image)

In this new prototype one piece was higher than the other and they were screwed together back-to-back but in different height so that the upper parts are used as support for the surfaces in different height on each branch of the tree-looking shape. This shape gave a firmer and more rigid structure and shorter levers
for the loads or forces on the furniture. As floor support I used round wooden rods. I wanted to attach them horizontally to the ends of each lowest part of the stand, right underneath each surface. I had to find a strong joint for this attachment. I decided to let the stands go through the rods by making a rectangular cut and strengthen the rods underneath. This is shown in figure 21.

![Fig. 21](image)

This design looked much more simple and understandable than my previous attempts. Also it had a better chance to make the stability and static load tests because of the two pieces screwed back-to-back. The whole is also keeping the thought that Poäng brings to mind: will it hold?

The test resulted in a crack in one of the wooden rods. My reflections are however that it is a matter of trying to join the rods to the stand in another way. It is doable. It is a matter of finding a new solution that works without using too thick materials. If using
to thick material the support will be too heavy, too much in the way of feet while walking by and too much in attention. I want the furniture to be mobile and light and to be handy to use everywhere in the home or at a work place. This joint between the stand and the rods (in this case) is one key issue of this design. This has to be solved both aesthetically and technically if the product should stand a chance to be successful. The design gives flexibility sideways that is characteristic to layer-glued bended wood. This must be accepted if using it as a stool with an attached side-table. But it is not acceptable that it will break if sitting on the lower surface, regardless if it is meant to be used as a sitting device or not. The final solution of how to join the parts is not set yet. Another way to do it is to go from solid rods to layer-glued wood in the floor support as well. However, at this point I decided to start evaluating the functionality and the aesthetics in a real context.
Using the prototype in the home environment

Even if the construction is not finalized, this furniture prototype could be tried out in a real home environment. Therefore I took it home and my family and I used it together with a *Poäng* armchair. As for the aesthetics I found that *Poäng* and the prototype harmonized well with each other (fig. 22). I also found that they lift each other in a way that brings a new air and expression to the whole ensemble. Personally I think that *Poäng* looks more up-to-date with the prototype by it´s side. They support each other so that they can be placed more freely in a room.

*Fig. 23*
My family and I also found the prototype useful in the way that I was hoping for. It was quite easy to get the table surfaces in position and the furniture is light enough to slide on the floor when pushing or dragging it. You can quite easily control it with one hand when moving it. Additionally it is easy to find a natural grip when lifting the furniture and it is light enough to grab with one hand (fig 23-24). This is something that is important as I wish this product to be used in various scenarios at home or at a workplace.
I used the prototype as a single piece of furniture, with the lower surface as a stool and the higher surface as a table (fig 25). Doing this I quickly realized that the two surfaces are too close together in height and the lower surface should be adjusted. It was obvious that it was not ergonomically perfect, but after some height adjustments I believe that it will be good enough to use in the moment, when quick access is more important than a comfortable working position. I can see this need both in the home environment and in a work place, for example when doing a presentation or during a quick break.
An extra function that was discovered was that it could also be used as a side-table for the child version of Poäng. Figure 26 illustrates how this device brings the family members together.

Fig. 26
Summary and Discussion

Reflections from a sustainability perspective

This thesis does not aim to describe or discuss the environmental aspects of the raw materials used in Poäng. However a direct environmental impact of the product Poäng or other upholstery furniture could be the use of polymer foam made of petroleum in the upholstery. Ricky Ericsson\(^{12}\) mentions that the use of the foams might be because of the absence of a durable, recyclable alternative. This was one reason why I chose to work with a concept that wouldn’t contribute to throw away and buy a new armchair.

The production method of the wooden parts in Poäng is also important in these aspects. One crucial element of producing layer-glued wood is the glues that are used. Schleining, (Schleining, 2002) describes that the process of making bent layer-glued wood requires caution from a health perspective. Glues that are flexible are not suitable for making layer-glue wood, because they allow the layers of wood to slide. Therefore nonflexible glues are used. Some of these glues contain formaldehyde or other toxic substances (Schleining, 2002). I

\(^{12}\) Ricky Ericsson, Interview, Älmhult, 2016-02-23
don't know what exact glue is used for layer-glued wood in Poäng, but the glue makes the product more complex than just made out of wood. The kind of glue that is used could also be of interest when it comes to recycle the material. The issues of analyzing the raw materials from a sustainability perspective should be addressed in further research.

Aspects often discussed in sustainability discussions in media and in society are the use of materials, forests, chemicals and energy-sources etc. This is very important indeed. However I find that the discussion is more seldom about the design of the new and more eco-friendly products. Are they more innovative except for the materials used? To be really sustainable they need to be designed in a way, that make them useful and attractive to the intended user in the long term. As my thesis is in the field of product design I want to emphasize the importance of the practical need and the long lasting attraction for the product. Ann Thorpe reflects upon the subject of classics, economy and sustainable development. “If I keep my Eames chair for fifty years, it could replace five or ten lesser chairs that I need to “update” each time I redecorate.” (Thorpe, 2007).

In this theses I wanted to focus in furniture design and make something innovative in a sustainable way. Not only re-make another old concept in eco-friendly materials. I would like to see
my product being further developed in a team with engineers and experts within the field sustainability and eco-materials.

Reflections about the canon of design
Pollock (Pollock, 2014) states that the discipline of art history produces an androcentric and exclusivist norm, in a systematic way by deliberately canonizing art produced by men. The same is probably true for the field of design. Ahl and Olsson (Ahl et al., 2002) discusses that in other forms of art, like the music industry or movie industry there is a lively discussion of how the androcentric norm influences the art. However they point out that this discussion is missing when it comes to the field of design. One could question how design could be feministic or male chauvinistic? Can a table be feministic or a chair be androcentric?
Ahl and Olsson (Ahl et al., 2002) points out that male designers hardly ever are portrayed as male designers, while female designers often are female designers. Their products are interpreted as female or explained from the perspective that the designer is female, even though one could never know if the designer is male or female by just looking at the product. Maybe we can understand this by remembering what Pollock says about the systematic way of deliberately canonizing art produced by men. To continually define the designers and the designs as female might have the effect that they are in a way kept out of the canon.
This project is done within the context of an academic institution and could therefore be said to be taking part in defining the canon. To write a thesis about classics could be seen as a way to reinforce the already set standard, or canon. Once you verbalize a norm, you are in way part of keeping it a norm. In this thesis I have not challenged the androcentric norm in any way. For example the examples of designers of classics that are mentioned in this thesis are all male. However there are other norms than the androcentric norm. One norm that I think still is current in our society is that theoretical education has higher status than practical education and theoretical knowledge has higher value than practical knowledge. This is very close to my heart. I have experiences in both theoretical education and practical education, but I find my self much more a practical and pragmatic person. This has given me a desire to get an academic education and the combination of practice and theory in design education led me to study design. I have also come to realize that these practical skills were not coherent with the general and stereotypic view of what a designer personality is like. I think that mass media in many cases don't describe famous designers and architects practical work that leads to the success. This can give the false impression that they have little practical skills except for sketching, drawing or CAD. They are often portrayed as just knowing what looks good,
what is good taste and knowing the canon. I think that this has given the great public and sometimes even clients at producing companies a false picture of the designer; a genius that tell others how things should look like. However the look of an object is just a small part of it and has to be questioned if it conflicts with other aspects of the product. Also the look of a functional object has to communicate how it should be used, it is wishful if no oral or written instructions are needed. Many of these questions came up during my practical work with real materials and knowledge about woodwork and awareness of aesthetics, perception and traditions. The theories about the practical intellect have given me more confidence in my personal practical oriented nature.

This is also one reason for my desire to in this report try to verbalize my practical and tacit knowledge. It has inspired me to show others how I work in a design situation, using my practical skills. I hope that this could be a contribution to future research about how designers can work in practice. Maybe this is one small step of bringing the practical knowledge into the canon of design.

Do we need another classic?
This thesis is about revitalizing a chair that is considered to be an IKEA-classic. The Vitra Design Museum, which is an industrial museum in in Germany, has a collection of over 1800 pieces of
furniture and the vast majority are chairs (Vegesack and Dunas, 1995). One can really ask if there is a need for another classic chair. And who has the need for classics?

Max-Neef (Max-Neef, 1991) identifies nine different fundamental human needs and every need are defined according to four existential categories; being, having, doing and interacting. Max-Neef also classifies the ways these needs are met and he calls these “Satisfiers”. Some satisfiers actually satisfy the need; *Singular Satisfiers* satisfy one particular need and *Synergistic Satisfiers* meet the need and at the same time other needs are met. Other Satisfiers claim to be satisfiers, but they actually don’t meet the need (*Pseudo Satisfiers*) or even increase the need (*Violators*). *Inhibiting Satisfiers* over satisfies one need but by doing this it inhibits other need to be met.

What are the needs that are satisfied by a classic chair? One can imagine that some people want to have a classic chair to satisfy the needs of *Idleness* and *Identity*. Idleness is about relaxing and a comfortable resting armchair could meet this need, so in this case the classic chair could be seen as a singular satisfier. When it comes to Identity the need could be about expressing your self or about showing others and yourself that you belong to a specific group. In this case the classic chair might be a pseudo satisfier that works as a symbol of status that initially might reinforce the
identity but in the long run the risk is that the person looses sense of their real identity.

What are the needs for designing a classic chair? The needs that might be satisfied by designing a classic chair could be Protection, Understanding, Creation and Identity. The need of protection could be about financial support and if the product is successful the designing of a classic chair could be said to be a singular or synergistic satisfier. The need of understanding is about education, studying and developing intellectually and the need of creation is about having skills, working, being productive and interacting with cultural groups. In these cases the process of attempting to design a classic chair could be a singular or synergistic satisfier. The need of identity is about self-esteem, to define oneself as part of a specific group or to actualize oneself. I find it hard to generalize if these needs could be met by designing a classic chair. For a person with very low self-esteem to begin with, designing a classic might work as a pseudo-satisfier if the goal is to make a classic and become famous and recognized. The fame and recognition might still feel empty or unsatisfying. For another person with a better self-esteem to begin with, the recognition that might follow the designing of a classic, might actually work as a satisfier and the persons self-esteem and sense of self grows even stronger.
According to this very brief analysis of the needs of classics, one could say that it seems like a classic chair is a bigger satisfier for the designer than for the consumer. To test this hypothesis a deeper analyses is needed.

Reflections about the importance of background research
In hindsight I realize that the research part of the case is a big part of the whole. It is important that the designer have much knowledge about the case to be able to work effectively with the models. By working with physical models the background research can be reflected-in-action and many aspects of design can be worked on with a great focus. There are many practical things that are not discussed or pronounced verbally in a design situation. Many times I have found myself trying for half a day or more to solve a problem by thinking, sketching and discussing with others. As soon as I start building something I have many times come up with the solution in just a half-an-hour or so.

Reflections about practical methods of design
When I shape with my hands it is like having a creative conversation that ends with something real that is either useful or not useful. But either way I always end up with something that can directly be discussed with my self and others. Aspects like aesthetics, size, personal expression and context can be easily
discussed with colleagues or clients. Physical aspects like size, durability, stability, strength, weight, feel, sound, safety, joints and ergonomics can easily be tested out and discussed right away and during the process.

If you want to discuss your suggestion with someone who is not a designer or used to work with sketches or digital renderings, having a physical model can be an advantage. Someone who is not used to interpret or translate sketches will not as easily see the possibilities or obstacles that a particular suggestion will offer. A physical model on the other hand allows to be tried out and discussed more easily. A practical method of design could also make it easier to discuss with other professionals who also carries a lot of tacit knowledge. For example if you show a digital 3D model to someone who has a lot of experience in carpentry, they may not access their tacit knowledge in the same way as if you have a physical model.

Something that a digital 3D model offers, that is not as easily done with a practical method of design, is that different designers can work on different aspects of the same design at the same time. The digital model offers to quickly try out different looks of the surface and technical drawings can easily be printed. In the case of the physical model, this can be done when the design and construction is set.
In the end it all comes down to personal preferences, earlier experiences and skills what method is the best match for what designer.

Reflections about using a practical method of design in this project
I am convinced that the final result would have been very different if I had used a different method of design. The final slender look was a result of many attempts to find a form that felt right. The form follows function in the sense that I tried to find a stand that wouldn’t be in the way of the stand of the Poäng chair or other furniture. At the same time I wanted to keep the table surfaces close above the users lap while sitting in the chair. I was able to address this problem early in the process thanks to the physical model that I could try out continuously.

This method of design has also allowed me to test the strength and stability of the product out at an early stage.
Evaluating the suggestion for revitalizing *Poäng* according to the four factors of classics

*Time and Quality*

To tell if this product will stand the test of time the prototype should be tested out with more rigorous test methods in a test lab with thousands of repetitions simulating every day strain.

As for quality, the layer-glue wood is very durable and the side table is put under less stress than a *Poäng* chair. As discussed earlier the floor support is the weak link of the construction. But if a good solution for this is found, one can assume that this piece of furniture will hold for at least a generation.

Compact living is a way of living that might become even more common in the future. United Nations DESA’s Population Division (United Nations, 2014) predicts that urbanization will increase in the future. Today 54 % of the world’s population lives in urban areas. The prediction is that in 2050 66 % of the population will be living in urban areas and combined with the overall population growth this means that another 2.5 billion people. The trend of compact living could be assumed to be an effect of urbanization and lack of space and housing shortage.

This piece of furniture can be used both as a coffee table, a dining table and a working desk. It’s slender and space efficient and
enables you to arrange the room more freely, which makes it suitable for compact living. To eat in the same furniture as you use for relaxing, working or socializing could be a natural behavior among the grown-ups of the future. If so this kind of furniture could become a new standard in the same way as a coffee table is today.

*Form and Function*

The product has a simple form. I find it unpretentious and it’s without unnecessary decorations. The silhouette of the product is graphical and easy to recognize. It is a combination of straight lines and circular curves that feels familiar and easy to understand. It’s traditional in the way that it is put together and no parts need to be concealed. This makes the construction understandable.

*Identity and Acknowledgement*

At this stage of the process, this product doesn’t have an identity yet. There is a need of a name for the concept as well as the specific product. A good way to make the product iconic is to come up with a name for the specific product. Especially if the name of the specific product also becomes the name for the concept.
If IKEA would be interested in continuing the development to make a final product of this new design, the product would have a chance to reach a global market and it would than get a shot at becoming a selling success.

*Charisma and It*

Of course this factor is the one that is hardest to control and therefore hard to evaluate. I think that this design has somewhat a unique look and maybe people will perceive it as having a personality or some charisma. After using it at my home for a week I came to like it more and more. It feels friendly, helpful and allowing. By allowing I mean for example that eating and sitting in a relaxed position in front of television feels more sophisticated now than before.
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