

General and New Perspectives on Product Design in Finland

Timo Silvonen

Invited Professor, Faculty of Crafts and Design, College of Fine Arts, Seoul National University

Abstract

Finland, the small Nordic country, far from anywhere, just happens to be one of the most modern and technologically advanced nations in the world. It is also the home of several leading global brands in their fields. Among these belong for example Nokia, Kone Elevators, and Metso Paper. This strange, cold country with its by reputation reserved and introvert Arctic people, manages to operate smoothly in the global village; in business, technology and also world politics. People from all over the world want go to Finland to study and work, knowing a lot about the clean, green, spacious country with extensive social security, equal women and general well-being.

Key words : Finland, product design

1 . Finland's History

1. A Brief History of Finland

In the 1150s the Swedes' crusades to Finland started and so started a long rule of Sweden, ending in the Finnish War 1808-1809. Sweden lost Finland to Russia, which became a quite free autonomous Grand Duchy with the Czar as its ruler.

In the early 14th century the first Finnish students arrived at the Sorbonne, France's leading university. In 1543: Bishop Mikael Agricola released the first Finnish

-language book, a grammar.

Independence was gained in 1917. It was at stake against Russia during World War II, but like David against Goliath, Finland fought so wisely and determined that it made even Stalin say: "A nation which has fought so valiantly for its independence deserves respect." Winston Churchill said already after the winter war: "Finland alone in danger of death, superb, sublime Finland! - shows what free men can do." There still lies a deep national pride because of all this: The freedom to be oneself, among being trustworthy, is still one of the nation's highest regarded values.

2. Traditions and Values

The Finns have a special attitude to words and speech. "Take a man by his word and a bull by its horn": if something is said, it must be important and it is true. Small talk is considered suspect by definition, and is not especially valued. Finns enter rarely into conversation with strangers. But the hospitality of Finns easily overrides reserve and shyness. Things change though: a few decades ago this nation was considered to have an uncommunicative, reserved, introvert Arctic tribe. The more common view today is hyper mobile communicative, Hi Tech freaked people; in buses, trams and subways you can see as much playing with mobile phones and digital cameras as in Seoul.

Finns deeply respect and love nature. Recycling and sustainable design are very advanced. Other most important values are a home of one's own (being the only one having anything to do about worldly possessions or money), an honest and trusting relationship, and the aforementioned freedom to be oneself. Finns are highly individualistic, to an extent that they sometimes have a notorious reputation of stubbornness. It should not be taken too seriously: Finns just have to be convinced well to get them on your side.

3. Industrial History

The first Finnish systematic industrial policy was declared in 1616 under Swedish rule. Iron works produces metal goods for household usage. Tar was burned, and ships were built. In the 1860s sawmill industry gained momentum. Pulp and paper

industry joined in later, creating the slogan “Finland lives from the forest”. The wealth generated propelled development of other industries: textiles, metals and engineering that grew to be the nation’s savior from the late 20th century economic storms.

After World War II, Finland was the only European country that paid all its war reparations. 226.5 million USD, to the Soviet Union, was delivered down to the last cent, as machinery and products. Freedom and national independence are so highly valued and earned. Because of the Soviet Union’s urgent need for machinery and goods, war reparations were the key to the relatively fast modern development of Finnish engineering. The last train loaded with war reparations crossed Finland’s eastern border in 1952, the year of the Helsinki Olympics. In 1952 Finland showed itself and to the World that it belongs to developed countries.

Industrial arts and the advancements in production technology gave birth to the concept of ‘Finnish Design’ and generated public awareness of Finnish glass, ceramics, furniture and textiles.

II. Design History

1. Wooden Architecture

In architecture, the long history of living in the forests developed a skilful timber construction heritage, the “pheasant architecture”. Close relationship with wood is still evident. New and improved ways of treating wood respecting it as a versatile and renewable construction material are constantly developed. Latest examples of this are the Lahti concert hall - “Sibelius-House” and the Finnish embassy in Berlin.

2. National Romanticism

The trend in Europe towards the end of the 19th century was to discover a culturally oriented national identity that would inspire all artistic creation. In Finland, the National Romantic movement drew its inspiration from motifs, forms and materials originating from the province of Karelia and the national epic *Kalevala*. This culminated in the concept of the complete work of art in which the architect was responsible for every detail. At the same time, various groups of designers and

craftsmen were established.

Kalevala Koru is a Finnish jewelry brand still completely based on ancient motifs captured in Kalevala. The motifs go back to the Iron Age and the Viking Era. Most models in the collection are replicas of the ancient originals discovered in archaeological excavations. The jewellery is designed and manufactured under the guidance of archaeologists, either as direct copies of the originals or as adaptations of them.

Lapponia Jewelry Oy also upholds this long tradition of fine Finnish craftsmanship with its cast sculptural jewelry. Bjorn Weckstrom's necklace "Planetoid Valleys" got famous worldwide when it was worn by Carrie Fisher in the first Star Wars movie.

3. Functionalism

In the early 20th century a more practical rationalism emerged alongside National Romanticism, preceding the rise of Functionalism in the 1930s. The predominating trend in public building during the '20s, after Finland became independent, was a derivative classicism. Historical motifs and ties were not rejected until the arrival of Functionalism in the 1930s. The humanism and rationalism of Functionalist design embedded the idea of refined simplicity in the Finnish consciousness. The idea was to industrially produce rationally designed and reasonably priced everyday goods. Rational thinking is a characteristic feature of the Nordic psyche. Historically, the living conditions of the North put much emphasis on practicality, durability and simplicity. They are virtues dictated by the scarce resources.

The leading figures in functionalism were Alvar and Aino Aalto, who, in addition to their architectural works, also created furniture and household glassware. Alvar Aalto's bentwood furniture embodied the principle of practical, reasonably priced goods within the reach of all. For decades (if not still), these served as the archetype of Finnish design and only later became status symbols in the home, as they still are. Artek is a furniture shop selling exclusively Aalto's furniture.

With functionalism, architecture evolved to Finnish Modernism, its absolute star being Alvar Aalto. Alvar Aalto is sometimes found to be the best known Finnish person around the world, and he without doubt has been the most influential and respected Finnish Architect. It could be claimed that Alvar Aalto took the humble pragmatic principles of traditional Finnish design and cultivated them to such a

rational architectural theory and practice that its merits cannot be questioned.

4. Industrial Artist-Designers

Post war reconstruction was a time of rapid industrialization and migration from the countryside to the towns. With the end to raw material shortages in the late '40s, industry began to remodel its collections and consciously employ designers, who now had a wide range of opportunities. One such opportunity was to design objects suitable for the newly built but rather cramped urban flats. These objects had to be multipurpose and stackable. In the '50s, the range of consumer goods expanded to meet the needs of an urbanizing society. An awareness of simple forms and elegant materials was deeply ingrained in the applied arts. Designers' names were a guarantee of quality, and their international fame made them into national heroes on a par with sportsmen.

The industries to flourish in all the Nordic countries were the glass, ceramics and furniture industries. Some most notable Finnish names were Oiva Toikka, Timo Sarpaneva, Kaj Franck with their highly regarded glass designs and cooking/kitchenware and furniture designer Yrjö Kukkapuro. The kitchenware and glass heritage is conserved and also evolving well by Hackman Designor that controls the famous Iittala (glass) and Arabia(ceramic) brands.

5. Economic Growth and New Materials

Rapid development, plus the appearance of new materials, made mass production possible in the '60s. Foreign trade expanded, living standards improved, televisions and household appliances proliferated, all of which had a profound effect on everyday life. The boundaries between the craft, decorative and visual arts were obscured and the same materials were used by all. However, industrial design became a clearly differentiated area of its own, with the emphasis on technology even creating a style of its own, High Tech.

Fibreglass and plastics-enabling manufacturing forms never before possible-fascinated designers to an excess. This era of space age optimism of the sixties and a utopian vision of "a new stance for tomorrow" culminated in the birth of an UFO-shaped all plastic residential house, Futuro, in 1968.

Eero Aarnio might be the best known Finnish furniture designer utilizing plastics. His chairs “Ball/Globe” and “Pastil” are collector’s items that can be bought anywhere, from the US to Hong Kong.

6. New Demands

In the '70s, new values appeared alongside this faith in technology, and designers were faced with new demands, like ergonomics and work safety, and the need for special environments for the elderly, handicapped and children. The disabled and elderly are taken care with urban planning and commuting design exceptionally well in Finland. The long term goal of all this planning is that the ever increasing elderly population and the handicapped could manage as much their lives as possible without help. In Helsinki, wheelchairs or baby carriages can be driven straight into the new low floor buses and trams from raised platforms. Healthcare equipment industry is a big user of industrial design.

International trends and the boom years of the '80s ushered in the ideas of pluralism and multiplicity. Post Modernism flourished, borrowing its detail from past styles, especially in architecture. Companies reintroduced old models at the same time as they developed new ones, and the role of industrial design strengthened.

The recession in the late '80s and early '90s has only underlined the ethical responsibilities and goals of designers. Following Germany quite close, Finland has integrated sustainability and ecological thinking into most its design. It is logical for a nation that still has the rare luxury of clean environment and lots of space. We Finns understand that this is something no money can buy, and if we lose our precious clean nature, we can never get it back. We also cannot go anywhere else and find a more spacious, green and still developed society.

Machinery and the metal industry, the not so traditional industrial design clients, have become one of the main users and developers of Finnish industrial design. Not a famous topic in high street design media or among the public, production and professional machinery is an area where there is a tremendous amount of work for industrial designers. Material usage, construction, assembly, usability, maintenance and safety are areas that can be greatly improved by integrating industrial design into product development with engineering. The design solutions in these

projects are far from styling. They are closer to Alvar Aalto's functional architectural heritage. And, like Aalto's architecture, well executed functional designs always end in aesthetically pleasing results.

In architecture, the latest famous developments have been achieved in the double-layer glass construction, that is used as a system for storing the sunlight's heat energy for using it to heating or air conditioning. The incoming air is "pre heated" by the sun between the window layers several feet from each other. Natural sunlight is also designed to be the main light source in these new modern office buildings, shattered indirectly avoiding glare. When diminishing, it is compensated automatically by daylight type electric lighting.

III. Finland Now

1. Geography and Population

Finland has a special location, geographically and politically. Its impossible to understand language has the same Ancestors as Korean: the Ural Altaic family.

25 % of the country's area lies north of the Arctic Circle, making summer up there quite unbelievable: The sun does not set for about 73 days. In winter period in the north, the sun remains below the horizon for 51 days. It is called the polar night, in Finnish *Kaamos*. Temperatures can hit -40 C (the record is -53 C).

Neighboring Sweden, Norway, Russia and Estonia, and before the next expansion of the European Union, Finland's land border with Russia forms the eastern border of the European Union. We could call Finland traditionally "Gateway to the East and West". With close trading ties to the Soviet Union, Finland was the closest western country to the Eastern European business.

With 338 000 sq. km, Finland makes Sixth largest country in Europe in area. But the population density is very low, 17 persons per square kilometers, making 5.2 million inhabitants. The capital and biggest city Helsinki has only 560 000 residents. We have the luxury money can't buy in most countries: space. 10 % of the area is water, there are almost 190 000 lakes and 180 000 islands. We could say that the rest of Finland is a forest, 69 % of area. Deep forests can be reached in about 15

minutes from any city's centre.

Finland is one of the world's sparsest populated and most densely forested countries. Thus, the closeness to nature and the harsh conditions have taught us to live along the wilderness and draw inspiration from natural materials, as well as nature's practical designs. Finnish product design has been responsible in creating the term "Nordic cool." Combining ergonomics, functionality, no nonsense timeless styling and sustainability with high tech know how, the quality, usability and aesthetics of Finnish products is now well appreciated throughout the world.

Coming from a country of only 5.2 million inhabitants, the Finns have always had to look abroad to survive in business. Home market was never enough for high-tech, mass produced lo tech hasn't been profitable for decades with the high labor costs Finland has. Maybe the "view of the outsider" to the world taught us the importance of understanding different cultures and lifestyles quite well. This, for example, is the secret behind Nokia's rise to the world's biggest mobile phone manufacturer, executed by technological expertise and high design.

Remote but international, Finland has now more than 104,000 citizens of other countries. In Helsinki more than 60 languages can be heard.

2. Women

Women are remarkably high in Finnish society. President Tarja Halonen, chosen by direct popular vote in 2000, is by surveys the most popular Finnish president ever. Sirkka Härmäläinen rose from the post of the Bank of Finland's chairman to a Board member in the European Central Bank. Elisabeth Rehn was the former Minister for Defense, then a UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in former Yugoslavia. Riitta Uosukainen spent a long time as the chairperson of parliament. 52 % of Finnish workforce is women.

3. Economy

The Finnish gross national product per capita is very high: In 2002 31 350 USD / Year. But probably the highest income taxation in the world (with pensions up to 70 %) takes the consumer's buying power down to one of the lowest in the Western

Europe. The country is rich, the people are not. The nation's wealth is spent basically on high social security, well maintained infrastructure and education.

Biggest exports are electronics and electrotechnical goods 27.5%, metal and engineering products 27.1%, and forest industry products 26.5%.

Imports consist of raw materials, machinery and components, consumer goods, including textiles, clothing and cars. Finland is one of the 12 first Euro countries.

4. Education

1) Primary School

With Korea, Finland has the highest literacy rates and level of education in the world. All state education is free. 99.7 % of the age group completes the totally free (including lunch) compulsory schooling. In colleges and universities students pay only for books, materials. The only bill is healthcare tied to student union's memberships, around 100 USD a year. Tuition is free in all universities. Also, adult education for working people comes with a nominal charge. For example, we can study a foreign language for 40 50 dollars for a half year semester. Remember, the highest taxes in the world. In Finland the saying "There is no such thing as a free lunch" is extremely well known.

2) Secondary School

From the voluntary secondary schools, 16 year old Finns can choose between general and vocational education. Senior secondary school (high school) is built by courses. It takes 2 4 years to finish with a national matriculation examination. Before the emphasis was placed either on languages or math and related sciences. Now for determined students there are more possibilities in specializing already in secondary school.

Vocational schools prepare for a practical job: there is theory in classrooms and practice in workshops. An important part of this education is on the job training at actual workplaces

3) Tertiary Education

After secondary level, students can choose between polytechnics (like a college

but more practice oriented) and universities. There are 20 universities in Finland. Bachelor's (3 years, 120 credits), Master's (160/80 credits, 5 years), Licentiate and Doctorate Degrees are now available through all of them. In addition there are MBA & other courses offered for working professionals.

4) Tertiary Education in Design

Design degrees in Universities are available through more routes than other academic studies. Emphasis in selection is put on talent, so it is possible to enter also via a vocational school/polytechnic route.

In the field of design, degrees are offered in

- Cultural Studies
- Art Education
- Media Studies / New Media (Media Lab)
- Industrial Design / Product and Strategic Design
- Furniture Design
- Fashion Design
- Interior Design
- Package Design
- Jewelry and Silverware
- Graphic Design
- Multimedia Design
- Photography
- Film and Television
- Design for Theatre, Film and Television (set design)
- Applied Art and Design
- Ceramics and Glass
- Most respected institutes of design are
- University of Art and Design Helsinki (UIAH, 1871-). The oldest and best known.
- University of Lapland, Rovaniemi (Art & Design 1990-). Northernmost university in the EU, well equipped and modern. This university is preparing the whole degree and application process in English.

- Lahti Polytechnic Graduates have a good reputation for their practical skills already when entering working life.
- In addition, there are a growing number of polytechnics offering industrial design, fashion design, graphic design and crafts programs.

The International Design Business Management program (IDBM), started in 1995, and is a joint teaching and research program of three leading Finnish universities: the Helsinki School of Economics, the University of Art and Design Helsinki and the Helsinki University of Technology. The purpose of the program is to bring together experts in different fields within the concept of design business management. The objective of the IDBM program is to train skilled professionals for key roles in international design business. The program underscores the importance of design as a competitive factor among others, such as technology. Ten to fifteen good students in their final stage per year are selected from each of the participating universities. Students in the IDBM program complete courses in two other universities to the extent of 16 to 24 credits. These courses are mostly normal studies at the respective universities, familiarizing students with studies in other fields and helping them broaden their own perspectives. Some of the courses are intensive study periods with problem solving exercises in practical business through case studies and projects. The core of the IDBM program consists of a project commissioned by a company and lasting one academic year. Within the industry project a multidisciplinary team of three to five students addresses problems related to the marketing operations, product development, logistics and/or design operations of the company concerned. The project permits students to engage in practical work in a multidisciplinary team by contributing their own skills and expertise. Most students end up finding an interesting thesis from the area of this project. The duration of the IDBM program for students is from one to two years.

Lately, the program organization has grown to offer also post graduate (licentiate & doctoral) studies & research, as well as "IDBMPro" program for managers.

5. Recent Economic History

1) Recession

Deregulation of financial markets in 1986 led to the fact that the flow of money

got quite reckless, creating the so called "Casino economy". With this, the disintegration of the Soviet Union that made Finland lose a huge trade partner, led to a recession in 1989. It was substantially more severe in Finland than elsewhere. Unemployment hit more than 20 %, and Finland got under a heavy foreign debt.

2) Recovery

Devaluation 1991 hit the foreign borrowing domestic industry severely, but got the exports growing. EU has always been an important export target to Finland, but in the 1990s the Far East's share grew considerably. The importance of the USA has also grown since the recession. This development finished in placing Finland quite firmly as a global trader. Dramatic national budget cuts led to Finland being accepted among the first wave of 12 countries to join the European Monetary Union (EMU) and take the Euro currency.

3) Industry and Economy Now

Finnish industry grew a third 'supporting leg' in the 1990s. Along with the forest sector and metal and engineering, high technology is now a major source of export revenues. State of the art electronics are created for many industrial sectors. Professional electronics for measuring, analyzing, controlling processes and the environment, with brands like Metso Automation and Vaisala, are well known around the world. And this is just a start. Why exactly can this happen in such a small country?

Limited manpower, extremely high labor costs and taxation, combined with small and narrow natural resources, small domestic market and, due to location, high transportation costs, but with high level of education, don't leave many alternatives. Added value is essential to survival.

Thus, Finnish product and service businesses are concentrating more and more, exactly the opposite from Korean *Chaebol* tradition. Our solution is focusing: Find an original core competency, something others have not figured out. Put all resources to be the best and the *best known* in that. Make sure your core competency is and stays unmatched by competitors. Get rid of everything else.

IV. Examples of Focusing

1. Friitala

Friitala that has manufactured all its products in Finland for over 100 years. Friitala produces high quality leathers and leather fashions. 80% of production is exported. How can Friitala compete in a labor intensive industry against countries with much lower labor costs?

By joining forces with high tech manufacturers, earlier used by the industries that need precision made parts. Together with these, Friitala has created its own innovations, like automated cutting based on use of water jets, water repellent leathers by a unique tanning process, and what it calls Bonded or Techno leather. Leather is fixed together with textile by a secret method, so that they can be handled in production as one material, enabling also the production of reversible garments.

2. Marimekko

Marimekko managed to make this whole clothing and textile brand individualistic. With a turbulent history, the national clothing icon is now run by a female powerhouse Kirsti Paakkanen. It is a Finnish legend that's boldly striped or patterned products are instantly recognizable. Marimekko regenerates its classic products with new colors and twists every year.

3. Fiskars

Fiskars, founded in 1649, builds the most awarded hand and gardening tools in the world. Nothing else worth knowing about. One of the earliest combiners of engineering and industrial design, it is a quality meets usability success story. Nobody has yet managed to copy the world's most copied scissors right! The handles can be copied, but the best kept secret, manufacturing of the precision ground curved blades are where copying stops.

4. Suunto

Suunto started in 1936 by a liquid filled field compass. It focused on combining

its strength in precision mechanics with new skills in electronics. What started off as a company in the business of measuring direction and changes in direction, moved into one measuring gradients, heights, and depth as well, on land and under water. Still focusing tightly on wearable sports computers, it is the global number one brand in its field. This would not have been possible without combining technical expertise with advanced knowledge in usability and industrial design.

5. Polar

Polar concentrates on high tech biofeedback training and exercise. Fitness software and on line trainers for weight watching, running, cycling, fitness for health, combined with Polar heart rate monitors, this is a personal digital coach. Polar is also a very well known brand worldwide. And, like Suunto, recognized the value of industrial design when wanting to penetrate all markets in the world.

6. Nokia

Nokia, the flagship of Finnish high tech, is almost too well known to discuss about. The corporation that once built everything from machinery through toilet paper to rubber boots, is now only about mobile phones, mobile networks, and lately interested in mobile content. A founding member of Symbian network, now is the world's biggest mobile phone maker and the world's 6th most valuable brand. Why? One of the reasons Nokia itself tells is industrial design. In the business of never-before seen products, where supply creates demand, Nokia still kept asking: "what is there on people's minds?" Studying all aspect of human life and different cultures, maybe one of the main reasons for being number one now is that Nokia was the first one to understand and really respect the differences of people, by creating different products for them. Just looking at the model range and comparing to any other mobile phone maker: it is something that can be called extensive. Perhaps believing in individualism is very natural for a company born in Finland.

7. Oras

Oras walked till the end of the road with its faucets, thought many. After

saturating the basic product market not being able to grow more, Oras joined forces with Alessi, and is now known to be a part of a high design bathroom world. "Il Bagno Alessi" ("The Bath by Alessi") is a complete bathroom concept designed with Stefano Giovannoni, a Milan architect. Laufen (Switzerland) provides the ceramics, Inda (Italy) the furniture and accessories to go with Oras's new range of faucets.

V. The Value of Design

Design, especially industrial design is now considered to be one of Finland's core competencies, standing beside technology. Metso Paper admits that 2 out of 10 paper machines deals are won because of industrial design. It is a differentiator when competitors catch up with technology. Metso Paper is a forerunner of industrial design in heavy machinery. In these design mega-projects of over a hundred people and dozens of participating companies the ease of manufacturing, efficient assembly, safety, ease of maintenance, cleanliness and usability have increased radically, producing at the same time aesthetically convincing production lines. Now machinery industry is a major client group of Finnish design consultancies. Timberjack and Valtra Valmet have successfully introduced thought out ergonomics and usability to forest machinery and tractors. Medical appliance manufacturers like Datex Ohmeda, Instrumentarium Imaging, Soredex and Finndent have known the benefits of industrial design for a long time.

1. Is the Star Designer Dead?

An industrial designer has to adapt. He/she has to be like the best actors or actresses: able to really live different roles. Some of the roles that I have needed to play are

- *"Missing link"*- in the middle on technology, marketing and end users, being able to look from the outside, from all these three angles.
- *"Emotionalist"*- a strong emphasize of the desired values and emotional aspects of the product and its manufacturing company.
- *"The official lunatic"*- once a I was called to a big multi disciplinary meeting

with this title! An industrial designer can be the catalyst to question, break rules and turn concepts inside out and upside down, encouraging bringing out new approaches.

- *"Imager"*- when a design showing and strengthening the brand it represents is called for designers might be the only ones able to concretize a brand image.
- *"Visualizer"*- especially early in a project. Visualizations bind the product development team together. Not just renderings, appearance models and mockups but also illustrations of systems, values, lifecycles etc. must tour around the world in market researches for final production decisions.
- *"Realizer"*- any designer must be able take or direct ideas all the way to production offering marketing support material at the same time.

Thus, I believe that in the main world of products there cannot be star designers. Of course, like actors always bring their own personality into the role, there is a personality of the designer always involved. But being a team player in any team, and remembering that design is a service profession-service for the people who are not designers-is crucial.

Stefan Lindfors, being the best known, and the other Finnish "star designers" have less impact on the real design related product business in Finland than their predecessors. But we also need star designers. The media need star designers. Star designers like Philippe Starck have made a big contribution in bringing the topic of design available to anyone to discuss. Without them design would never have made it to the mass media. Naturally, design must be also affordable to anyone to make any difference. This is exactly what the anonymous heroes of design are doing every day. Finland has a lot of them. Korea has much more of them.

2. The Problems of Finnish Design

The quality of Finnish industrial design is considered globally to be very high, but the business of design has problems. Only the biggest corporations employ in-house designers, usually only a couple. Nokia has the only major strategic Finnish corporate design force. So we could think that the consultant business is big. In fact, industrial design consultancy business is very small. Average consultancies employ one

or 3-5 persons, the average annual turnover being less than 200 000 USD. The earnings principles of design consultancies are not working well. Even though the impact of design for clients companies is considered significant, from often strategic work design consultants earn the compensation of operative work. Business management consultants' turnover per person can be 4 times as high as industrial design consultants'. Clients hope design consultancies expanded their service portfolios, like IDEO has done. Finnish consultancies are yet too small and too under networked for that. There are not yet true partnerships between consultancies of different disciplines. (Finpro, TEKES 2001, Designium 2002).

3. Design 2005

There is an ambitious project that wants to change all this. The Government resolution on design policy 2000 recognizes officially industrial design as an important part of international competitiveness.

TEKES, the National Technology Agency, started and runs a program called DESIGN 2005 (MUOTO 2005 in Finnish). Between early 2001 and the end of 2005, 27 million Euros (~31 million USD) are allocated to this project. Its goals are:

- to raise the standard of design research
- make use of design expertise in corporate product development and business strategy
- to develop the services provided by design firms.

The program has started working towards all these goals. Industry and designers are getting closer with universities; first there were design projects, but now, more and more joint research projects. UIAH and Designium Innovation Centre are studying design values and usability. Helsinki University's cognitive psychologists carry out work research. University of Technology has its hands on usability, rapid prototyping, modeling, simulations, PDM (Product Data Management), and quality. Business Schools study topics of design business development and improving design as a business strategy.

4. Collaboration

Design is now regarded as one of the key competencies of Finnish economy, and it is increasingly supported with government level initiatives. Graduate students of design, economics and engineering study each others' fields as minor subjects. Collaboration of universities, design colleges, other research/development institutions and the corporate world is building a multidisciplinary knowledge base for future innovations and design business. Best practices are documented, processes are planned and streamlined and information is shared.

Size doesn't matter when knowledge is found, organized, shared and utilized in the most effective ways. Common understanding of design across professional and institutional borders gives a small country a chance to match the big ones in global competition.

5. Design Consultancy Business

Design consultancies in Finland are managed by designers, not by professional businessmen. Now they can get supported help from professionals in business, strategy and marketing, as well as for internationalization, that is ahead of all of consultant designers sooner or later. Every designer is already working on internationally distributed products.

6. New Design Clients

Small and medium sized industries can get financial support and expert advice with programs like DesignStart that is a free short introduction to industrial design by practicing design professionals. They can also participate in TEKES projects. With DESIGN 2005, the big companies are setting the example, and hopefully the smaller will follow with their applications to the ongoing application process. For the first time in Finland, research institutes, industry and designers are working together simultaneously in the same projects, and with common, concrete goals. These goals include this time also a documentation of successful methodology in design. Naturally when dealing with business, there is confidential information born, but the processes and best practices will generally be well kept public by the public research institutes.

7. New Challenges for Designers

Are they new, or have we only just recently discovered them? The future looks bright, if we understand how we have to change our attitudes. Design has become international and inter cultural; not only must we understand different countries, but lots of different professions, different corporations, subcontractors and institutions. I am happy to see how design is becoming more and more inter disciplinary. Design must be open to all the disciplines that can contribute to it. Thus, the people involved in design need to be multi educated. IDBM is a very good start but I would like to remember it as an introduction to a much larger inter disciplined education. We need the understanding of others to be able to work with others, and to create a friendly, responsibly functional world for all. We need to remember that no matter how much we study or work, metaphorically speaking *we will never graduate*. This is exactly why I love my profession. Every day we learn something new. Our formal education should provide us with the ability to learn at work.

8. How Finland Proacts

In Finland's case, free university tuition makes it a little simpler to break barriers. There are no absolutely uncrossable borders between faculties and universities. The flow of students between universities is so easy that some people consider it to enable "loitering". But utilized in the right way, we can breed a new generation of Masters that have views broad enough to manage this change of design structures. More and more the students study what they *need*, not only their major by the program. Because of low costs, international students are very easy to lure to Finland. Multi university projects with multi university studies have already started, when will we see the first multi national multi university degrees?

VI. Conclusion

Of course I have practiced the practicing designer's besetting sin that is at the same time designer's biggest strength: over simplification. All good conversations start with simplification.

Progress is always a matter of breaking away from our own personal cage of beliefs, values and habits. No individual or discipline is smart enough to create true progress alone. We need to see what is around us and understand how much there is to learn from others. We need to know our own discipline thoroughly, but also understand and respect others way of thinking. There usually is more than one party that is right.

If a Finn thinks his/her native tongue Finnish (or English that we are used to speak abroad) and only European cultural heritage, traditions and manners are enough to do well in Korea, it represents the kind of tunnel vision that stops us from realizing our true potential. We ourselves would be the ones who would be stopping us, and there should be no obligation for Koreans to even try to cope with it here in Korea. I have spent the last year studying Korean culture, manners, cooking and language. To my great delight I have experienced an absolutely wonderful atmosphere of acceptance and respect from Koreans, who never had any original prejudices against Finland (in fact, Koreans have amazed me with their knowledge and respect for my country). If there ever appeared any reservations against my person or country, they were all born of my assumptions that Korean people should speak English or behave like I have been used to in Europe. When I recently achieved a capacity to have tiny conversations in Korean and used that no matter how grammatically disastrous my speaking might still be, Koreans have showed great appreciation for it. One way of showing that is also a willingness to try to speak more English back, without worrying about it not being perfect. Now I have just taken a huge step towards true friendship with many good hearted Korean people. Lesson learned: understand, give and show respect first and you will certainly receive it back. In everywhere you go.

As designers, who still are considered “foreigners” among a lot of disciplines we work with, we should possess those capabilities that enable us to show respect and understanding to others. Often “others” work in their local cultures where we are the immigrants in. We must not stick with our fellow “foreigners” and stay in our “Designer Itaewon” but go bravely in the middle of the others and start making friends.

It is more than worth it.