

4. A STUDY ON SUPPOSITIONS OF DESIGN

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§ 13 IMAGINATION IS BUILT UPON PRACTICAL CONDITIONS

The principles of Chapter 1 offer a design-relevant distinction in different design dimensions as below (*Fig. 46*).

modalities	levels of scale	context layers	object layers
true or probable	...	administrative	intention
possible	10m	cultural	function
desirable	3m	economic	structure
imaginable	1m	technical	form
	...	biological	content
		physical	

Fig. 46 Design dimensions: distinction between modalities, levels of scale, context layer and object layer

In these columns the *conditionality* fascinates me. The distinction between different forms of practical conditionality is further discussed in chapter 3 p43 on logic.

For the modalities in *Fig. 46* 'imaginable' is a comprehensive basis. In *Fig. 3* on p11 that concept is not outlined, because for drawing its border you should be able to imagine the other side, the 'unimaginable'.^a The imaginable then has no conceivable limit, but it increases by 'unbelievable' discoveries and design. Any desire must be imaginable, but it is not sure if all possibilities are also imaginable.

The limit of the **possible** is not determined here by what is currently possible at the moment, but what can ever be technically and practically possible. That limit is not certain. For now, I accept the limitations that are generally accepted by science such as the impossibility of a perpetuum mobile. However, you can also develop new possibilities that were previously unimaginable. Our imagination can be expanded in a learning process with conditions for new images.

Since science is a human design, it is itself limited by human imagination and underlying suppositions (conditions for imagination). In order to gain some insight of these limitations, I have described in detail some typical parts of the physical, biological and human sciences from my own limited knowledge (chapters 3 to 9).

The question remains whether this reconstruction of the existing reality ('science') also covers all technical possibilities. The instruments with which her exploratory capacity has been extended are themselves human constructions.

a A variant on Wittgenstein(1918)Tractatus logico-philosophicus(Berlin 1963)Edition Suhrkamp Vorwort

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The mathematics considered as untouchable is such an instrument. Her limitation, however, is that she reduces differences and changes to equality and repetition (chapter 3). It is a generalizing instrument.

I do not share the Platonic idea that ideas are a practical condition for material existence. Even mathematics as a world of ideas does not escape its physical conditions, however much it helps us to get to know them. She makes the endless repetitions with which we are confronted manageable. Repetition of mathematical operations can lead to a variety that is reminiscent of biological forms, but they are limited to exact repetition (§ 24 from p115 onwards).

Whether the **scale levels** in *Fig. 46* (and their analogy in time) also have a conditionality, I do not yet have a clear idea. It is conceivable that the abiotic representations have to build their conditions from the largest scale to the smallest scale, while in the case of the biotic representations the reverse way must be walked. They meet in the cell membrane.

The layers of **context** and **object** are consecutive conditions for their imaginability (*Fig. 44* and *Fig. 45* p50). The **context layers** in *Fig. 46*, however, raise the question whether technology, economy and governance or management are not parts of culture in general, defined as 'set of shared (sub)positions and technical conditions'.

I take the scale paradox into account here. Some kind of technology and economics has been supposed in every local culture, but there are parts that, independently of that local culture, also exist globally, inescapable as practical conditions for every contemporary culture, comparable to inescapable biological conditions.

A local culture, such as in Silicon Valley, could produce technological innovations, but after that they started to live their own lives globally as a given context. They have offered all local cultures new conditions to explore new possibilities.

Something similar applies to a modal economic competitive structure that resembles the biological 'survival of the fittest' that no one can evade. In this way they must be distinguished as independent, underlying, design-relevant practical conditions for each local culture.

The **object layers** in *Fig. 46* are identifiable moments of presentation and attention in each design process. They also require a different imagination. Since an object can always be placed within a context, but not the other way around, the object layers should be part of each context layer. They stand, however, as a way of thinking, aspect, focus or 'approach' from different directions 'perpendicular' (see also p85).