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The Diagram of Swedish Design

Exploring design from an anthropological perspective requires establishing some parameters around what sorts of objects, practices, ideologies, and other phenomena fall under the rubric of design. And exploring Swedish design in particular requires laying out not only what makes Swedish design "Swedish," but also what separates it from other kinds of design. In the first section of this chapter I will describe what I mean by "design" in general and how studying it anthropologically relates to important work in material culture studies and science studies. I will then detail the specific qualities and characteristics of both the ideological/political and the formal/material aspects of Swedish design. Finally, I will situate both Swedish politics and Swedish modernist design in relation to other similar political systems and modernist traditions, to identify the specific relationship between politics and design in Sweden.

Defining Design

"Design" is a curious term. It can describe very different sorts of things depending on who utters it, and for what purposes. In some instances "design" is conflated with the adjective "designer," which describes a type of commodity typically reserved for the wealthy and elite, or those who aspire to such a station. In other cases "design" is a code word for "added value," as when companies like Apple in the United States, or Volvo and H&M in Sweden, explicitly prioritize an attention to detail—of aesthetics, functionality, materials, and the like—as what distinguishes their goods from what their competitors produce.

Other characterizations of design focus on practicalities. In both professional and academic conceptualizations, design tends to fall squarely in the realm of the technical. There is often a marked emphasis on design as a systematic and rigorous *method* for creating things from specific kinds of inputs. The diverse practices of engineering, architecture, city planning, and software development, along with graphic design, industrial design, landscape architecture, and a host of other design disciplines, are all based in sets of precise principles—some of which are shared across these fields, many of which are not—that when purposefully applied to raw materials allow designers to create new objects—buildings, landscapes, posters, chairs, services, user experiences, town plans, and so on. In other words, design in this sense is a kind of controlled and cultivated creativity, with a stress on the particular practices involved in planning and creation.

An even more general sense of design, one that flows from its technical connotations, is as a basic *way of making*, situated somewhere between raw labor and artistic production. Design is not simply work, not simply labor, because the effort involved is carefully considered and usually subject to reflexive evaluation. Design is also not quite art—though it often bumps up against it, as we will see in chapter 4, because the objects of design, even those that foreground aesthetic qualities, are usually made to be used, to serve some practical function. From this broad perspective, design is not restricted to those with technical training or institutionally recognized skill, but applies widely to any kind of creative action that involves planning and forethought. What follows from this view is that the differences

between various kinds of making are based less in what they make, or even how they make it, but more in the relative degrees of professionalization, institutionalization, and cultural prominence each is accorded.

Where, then, does that leave us in approaching design as a sociocultural practice? Design concerns process, an active, almost teleological ordering of raw materials into some resultant thing, sometimes conceived as a physical object, but oftentimes as things with less obvious contours, like "activities," "services," and "experiences." I say "almost teleological" because while the general kind of thing strived for in designing is usually anticipated by its makers, other contingent specifics, like forms, functions, materials, and costs, are more subject to manipulations and unexpected outcomes in the process. Autonomous expressiveness is not necessarily design's central concern, though neither is it indifferent to it. Instead design is primarily an intentional structuring of some portion of the lived world in such a way as to transform how it is used, perceived, or understood. Design both delimits and affords relational configurations between people, spaces, and things, and does so in considered and unconsidered ways. Design can also capture specific meanings, and constrain or facilitate interpretation. The meanings that adhere to the objects of design are always situated and contingent, and linked both to the form of the designed product and to the contexts in which it is embedded. In other words, design is a kind of directed creativity with meaningful social consequences, a gradual and granular enstructuring of the everyday world.

While makers—designers, in typical parlance, though any given case may involve "designers" who are not trained as such—are absolutely central to design as a sociocultural practice, design and designing do not begin and end with the human actors responsible for driving design processes. The people who cultivate design and designing are always subject to the particular cultural flows of history, ideology, and politics on which "moments of designing"—when "ideas" are transfigured into "forms"—travel. Moments of designing matter, of course, but only insofar as they are considered alongside and in complementarity with other processes that shape and form designed things. Understanding how design makes things—and makes things mean—requires understanding how objects are shaped to tolerate meanings (Murphy 2013), the processes through which they are given those meanings, and how those meanings are negotiated and argued through different suasive processes.

Material Culture and the Force of Things

The assertion that design nudges the social world in certain ways as it enstructures that world—giving it shape and meaning, even if only ambiently—assumes that designed things retain a certain social power, and the anthropology of design I am advocating draws on a number of arguments that previous social scientific studies of materiality and technology have critically addressed in this regard. These arguments include the capacity of things—in particular artificial things—to impart some effect on the world; the agency of the people who make those things and who use those things, including reference to ideas about both intentionality and unintended consequences; the particular properties of the things designed and how they relate to other phenomena; and the nature of relations between people and things (and things and other things, and things and ideas), phenomena that may not always exist as distinct from one another in the world, yet which for analytical purposes often require at least some demarcation, in order to straighten out our concepts.

There are two particular lines of influence that have significantly informed the analysis that follows, both of which are built around a critique of the deep dualism, both ontological and analytic, separating human subjects from the nonhuman objects that always already surround them. I share this antidualistic stance, along with a more general concern these approaches share for closely attending to the mediated interactions that hold between people and things. But furthering these fundamental debates is not my specific goal. Instead I use these works as both delimiters and points of departure for the discussion of design and the power of things that follows.

In a series of monographs (1987, 2010, 2012) and edited volumes (1998a, 2005), Daniel Miller has carefully developed an influential theory of materiality primarily focused on consumption. Through deep ethnographic engagements with particular consumption practices, like shopping (Miller 1998b, 2001b) and the crafting of domestic interiors (Miller 2001c, 2008), or with particular artifacts like cars (Miller 2001a), cell phones (Horst and Miller 2006), and clothing (Banarjee and Miller 2003; Miller and Woodward 2012), Miller and his colleagues have been principally responsible for drawing material culture out from the shadows of bare context and bringing it to the fore in contemporary anthropological analysis. The

central tenet of this perspective is that buying, using, and interacting with objects transform not only the objects themselves and their meanings, but also the people who consume them within culturally inflected courses of action. Humans exist in complicated constellations of interaction, wherein things, people, space, time, and ideas all converge to form the social world. We give order to that world through the bonds and associations that we form with things, through which we make divisions, categories, and groupings, discern patterns, and draw connections. But what emerges from these relations is no static system. Because our interactions with objects are ongoing and shifting, these divisions are constantly subject to recasting, the categories are subject to reordering, the groupings to dissolution, and the connections to redrawing. Indeed our identities cannot be understood without reference—or even deference—to the role played by material artifacts in our identities' processual unfolding and modification. From this perspective humans and things are always mutually constitutive, and agency—whether it seems attributable to either humans or artifacts—is fundamentally embedded in their relations (cf. Winner 1980; Johnson 1988).

The second line of influence—though the influence is somewhat less direct—is the study of sociotechnical systems, or actor network theory, most commonly associated with the work of Bruno Latour (1993, 2007), Michel Callon (1986, 1987), and John Law (1987, 1992). Perhaps even more forcefully than Miller, the sociotechnical perspective, which derives from science studies but has in recent years been applied to a wider range of social domains, advocates the complete disavowal of analytic frameworks that grant primacy to human agency in processes responsible for manifesting the social world. Where Miller sees agency as constituted in the relationship between people and objects, actor network theory treats agency as more widely distributed both synchronically and diachronically across objects, inscriptions, people, practices, events, and spaces, all of which are assumed to be equally agentive. Viewed through this lens, an empirical field of action is leveled across its various constituents, as all parties—human, artificial, and natural—become mutually invested stakeholders in the collective production of knowledge and knowledge systems. By deprioritizing the role that humans play in complex social action and elevating the role of nonhuman objects, actor network theory posits a deep structure of agency within objects and networks of objects that is largely invisible to the

people who interact with them, but that is nonetheless contributory to their effective possibilities.

These areas of research represent some of the most intricate and detailed frameworks not only for thinking about how humans and objects interact, but also for thinking about how objects contribute to the broader production and reproduction of particular material and nonmaterial conditions in society. In drawing together these lines of influence to circumscribe an ambit for the anthropological study of design I have absorbed their shared critique of dualism, almost to the point of unrecognized orthodoxy, although my more humanist reflexes will admit that the sort of flattening of agency that actor network theory insists on is less preferred than Miller's retention of distinctly human modes of agency.

For Miller and the material culture school, objects are not simply instrumental for people in carrying on courses of action, but are deeply meaningful to them in many ways in their everyday lives, and thus help give form and content not only to the physical world, but also to the concomitant cultural worlds humans inhabit. The meanings that occupy the relations between people and things can be partly idiosyncratic, but also partly shaped by social forces, practices, and channels of circulation that continuously recast objects as they move between and across different sociocultural domains. What follows is that people and things, when examined through lenses of every resolution, are not empirically distinct from one another—though discussing them as distinct may be required by language and for clarity—but are instead always mutually constitutive: people make things, but things also make people.

One of the core advantages of actor network theory is its ability to handle practically any phenomenon it is applied to, including not just humans and artifacts, but also inscriptions, images, discourses, practices, and more. Relying on the principle of "generalized symmetry" (Callon 1986), according to which every element of the network must be accounted for with the same methodology, thereby not privileging any one node over another, actor network theory can easily incorporate any object of inquiry into an analysis without generating much methodological anguish—though matters like power, intentionality, consciousness, and concerns that never surface (Winner 1993) are more difficult to account for. While the methodological rigidity attached to generalized symmetry is not, I think, a tenable approach—from my point of view, regarding different kinds of

phenomena on their own terms respects their particular integrities and makes for better analysis—the basic ecumenical stance of actor network theory, in which a diversity of factors at multiple scales are viewed as contributing to the social reproduction of larger distributed systems, even when the contribution is not immediately visible or direct, is critical.

Latour (2008), noting the "weakness" of the concept of "design," which can encompass practices, styles, collections of things, attitudes, discourses, and more, has attempted to identify some of its most basic components within an actor network theory framework, and highlights five features in particular. First, because design is, in a sense, doing something less than "building" or "constructing" and is instead focused on incremental changes to the world, Latour claims that design is a particularly modest creative endeavor. Second, design is also a domain dominated by skillful pedants preoccupied by "a mad attention to the details" of what they make (Latour 2008:3). Third, design is a process of sign making, concerned with manipulating not only materials but also meaning and interpretation. Fourth, design does not seek to reinvent the world from scratch but to transform what already exists. Finally, design is inseparable from ethics, from evaluations of good design and bad design not just in terms of taste, but also in terms of its material effects. All of these criteria, loose and unaligned as they may be, are indeed central to delineating design.

Finally, I will add that Alfred Gell's (1998) emphasis on indexicality for facilitating the force of artifacts to affect the world is essential for evaluating how design connects to and interacts with practices, discourses, ideologies, and objects of various kinds, and in the process helps identify family resemblances between them. Indexical relationships are key for establishing and sustaining family resemblances across different phenomena. But rather than treating indexes as "natural signs," as Gell does, linking objects to creators, I treat them more as "naturalized signs," that is, signs that undergo cultural, social, and political procedures whereby the abductive field is reduced by degree, and indexical objects with some degree of "fit" are specified. Moreover, indexical signs are not the only kind of signs involved. Attending to multiple design practices, operating at multiple scales, that give cultural form to objects, not just as blunt artifacts but also their specific qualia and the semiotic "bundling" (Keane 2003) that those qualia entail, reveals how designing generates and distributes "dynamic interconnections among different modes of signification at play within a particular historical and social formation" (Keane 2003:410). In other words, design is, in part, a process of naturalizing signs and sign relations.

Diagramming Swedish Design

Bearing in mind this framework for studying design in general, I will be arguing in the remainder of this book that in Sweden *svensk design* in particular operates as a *diagram*, in Gilles Deleuze's (1988) sense, a set of relations linking the everyday world—composed of objects, spaces, people, and more—to the cultural ideologies that motivate the persistence of a social democratically infused "way of life." For Deleuze a diagram is a sort of map of social relations—and forces between social relations—that is agnostic as to the ontological state of its components, marking "no distinction between content and expression, a discursive formation and a non-discursive formation" (Deleuze 1988:34). Animate human subjects and inanimate artifacts, institutions and the discourses that help shape them, temporal events and atemporal flows are all gathered and delineated and rendered real within the diagram. As Jakub Zdebik (2012:1–2) describes it, the diagram "values the unformed, the state of flux, the dynamic, the movement towards actualization. It also deals with organization, forces at work in social and cultural constructs; it is a way to travel from one system to another. The diagram allows a glimpse of the state that comes before the formation of an object, and of what goes into its formation." In other words, while the phenomena captured by the diagram may themselves subsist and circulate precariously, the diagram supplies them with a provisional stability without fundamentally transforming them in any way.

As a diagram that maps Sweden's sociopolitical landscape, Swedish design is composed of lines drawing together people (designers, consumers, curators, citizens, politicians), things (everyday objects, their particular forms and arrangements), and ideologies (of care, responsibility, equality, justice, beauty) such that the modern sociopolitical formation of Sweden, with all of its attendant norms and cultural values, is constantly marked and remade at the level of everyday life. In this sense a diagram is also *machinic*, "a precise state of intermingling of bodies in a society, including all the attractions and repulsions, sympathies and antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and expansions that affect bodies of all kinds

in their relations to one another" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:90), which through the forces that hold between these elements "constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality" (142). The diagram of Swedish design does not simply *represent* relations between these different bodies, between people, things, and discourses; it actively and continuously *reproduces* and transforms—or in some cases, preserves—these relations. In its machinic composition the diagram of Swedish design is composed of innumerable separate but interlinking machines—the domains I analyze in the following chapters are, in a sense, four of those machines—all producing and reproducing and stitching together various qualities of Swedish design.

But how? For Deleuze diagrams are delineated according to two broad classes of lines—lines of enunciation, that is, "whatever can be articulated" (Deleuze 1988:32), and lines of visibility. To understand how the diagram of Swedish design is formally composed, and how its machines collaboratively reproduce Swedish design as such, requires some attention to how these two kinds of lines are made manifest.

Lines of Enunciation: The Final Vocabulary

As I climbed out of a taxi in the town of Visby in the summer of 2012, my eye caught the cover of a magazine peeking out from a bundle of reading material stuffed in the driver's seatback pocket. Its title was *Form & Design*. Having lived in Stockholm several years prior, I was not surprised that a glossy design publication would be considered light reading for a short cab ride. But Visby is not Stockholm. The biggest town on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea, Visby is far removed from the country's capital and other major cities in Sweden, in both its geography and its disposition. It is not a backwater town, by any means, but neither is it especially central to the contemporary Swedish design world. Yet even here, beyond the reach of the hustle and bustle of Stockholm, the lines that give shape to the diagram of Swedish design are tacitly articulated in the most mundane of spaces.

Lines of enunciation in the diagram of Swedish design trace out the boundaries and contours of what is pronounceable about objects and forms. They conjure the very category of *svensk design* itself, undergirding a fiat ontology that interpellates a cultural class simply by giving it a name and a face and a place to thrive, like magazines tucked away in the seatbacks of local taxicabs. In doing so these lines render dispersed objects examples

of the same kind of thing, while simultaneously constituting the discursive arena within which claims about the category and its tokens can be staked. They also help cement relations between particular material forms and the social bodies—individuals, institutions, media forms—that make and perpetuate those claims. Lines of enunciation are most typically manifest in what Deleuze (1988), following Foucault, calls "statements," ideologically loaded propositions and descriptions about the world that in their appearance quicken some portion of social reality. Statements are not always entirely linguistic (e.g., organized grammatically) or bounded fast in space or time. They are "never hidden, yet are not directly readable or even sayable" (Deleuze 1988:53). Individual statements constantly emerge in practice, sometimes in talk, sometimes in writing, sometimes in images, and often in how we interact with material objects or physical space. They are sometimes direct and sometimes oblique, and while no single instance necessarily defines any particular power position or ideology, each appearance, each line of enunciation, contributes to the reproduction—and sometimes the transfiguration—of the given order of things, even if by small degrees, without generating much recognition or critique. Together the lines of enunciation delineated by statements set the parameters within which rational thought and action can take place and constitute the terrain of the socially acceptable. These lines are intimately connected to history while at the same time remarkably liberated from precise temporal anchoring, providing social actors with the raw ontologies they need for making sense of social life.

Statements regarding the politics of Swedish design assume a number of guises. Formulations explicitly predicating ideological qualities of Swedish design have circulated since at least the late nineteenth century (see chapter 2), echoing across a century of political and social change in Sweden. In 1939, design historian and activist Gregor Paulsson, one of the most influential early proponents of modernist design in Sweden, published a book detailing in images—mostly photographs and architectural plans—the successful architectural reforms Sweden had undergone over the previous decade. In his preface he described this work as having two interrelated goals—developing a new aesthetic style for buildings and home furnishings, while at the same time attempting to reduce inadequate living conditions across the class spectrum:

> These two motives were in their turn based on the development of democratic ideals. The new shapes in architecture denoted a style of liberty, their

> social function was to express equality; the idea being to remove class contrasts and differences also where the community's outward appearance was concerned, and to raise the standard of the surroundings in which the neglected strata of the population lived. (Paulsson 1939:7)

Almost twenty years later Paulsson offered a more pointed distillation of that same sentiment with regard to everyday objects, what he called *formade kulturföremål* (designed cultural objects), identifying "use" as a central concern for design. He specified three different kinds of use that matter: "Practical use concerns how to handle the thing; social use concerns how to be with the thing; the aesthetic use concerns how to see the thing" (Paulsson and Paulsson 1957:13). Sidestepping trends that downplay the person as a component of design, this simple array of uses simultaneously emphasizes beneficial functionality, an attention to aesthetics, and a recognition that the object plays a social role in the life of a user.

In more recent years similar kinds of predicating statements have served as the basic building blocks of Swedish design discourse, including an even more elaborate set of criteria. Describing the guiding program of his organization, the director of the Swedish Society of Arts and Crafts (see chapter 4) wrote in 1982:

> We are trying to enrich the concept of "good design" and to expand the traditional idea of quality to include issues that go well beyond function and form. This comprehensive view means that products are well made in a human and pleasant working environment, produced without wasting valuable and irreplaceable natural and human resources, and sold at reasonable prices to satisfy real needs. (Lindkvist 1982:260)

Books focused on Swedish design or Scandinavian design, found in almost every bookshop in Sweden, are also suffused with these sorts of statements. A large volume celebrating Swedish design at the beginning of the twenty-first century described designing as

> [a] creative act by someone who wanted to express a feeling, a function or simply a powerful form. Whose goal was to satisfy his or her—and the universal—ambition to experience surroundings as aesthetically meaningful, both at home and in public settings. . . . Design that, when good, appeals to the eye and heightens our pleasure and well-being—that is to say, our quality of life. (Helgeson and Nyberg 2002:12)

And as one of Sweden's best-known design critics phrased it,

> Contemporary modern design is a symbol for a good future, freed from conventions and filled with ambitions for a better and brighter life. . . . With modern design one can show that democracy can be strengthened in practice by a better and more beautiful everyday. (Hedqvist 2002:102)

These are just a few of the countless explicit statements that delineate and articulate the ideological aspects of the diagram of Swedish design. They are composed around a particular descriptive paradigm—*democratic, social, equality, good, satisfaction, pleasure, quality, better, beautiful*, from the examples above—that, following Richard Rorty (1989), I am calling "the final vocabulary" of Swedish design. A final vocabulary generally consists of sets of words for describing things or states of affairs that are so close to other vague, yet powerful terms, like "true," "right," and "good," that when applied prevent alternative linguistic formulations from ever taking root—they are *final* in that those who sincerely employ them cannot conceive of any other legitimate means of expression. Final vocabularies are nimble and lean, not overburdened with complicated abstractions, and widely recognizable and repeatable (if not always believed) by those who hold some stake in the things they describe. This is not to say that final vocabularies are actually "true" in any absolute sense. Indeed, multiple final vocabularies can be used by competing factions to describe the same entity. Rather, the use of a final vocabulary signals that such descriptions are largely taken by their users at face value and assumes that they reflect an observable reality not open to critique or competing descriptions. In other words, final vocabularies represent the lexical concentration of ideology, an essential and essentializing rhetoric meant to highlight specific qualities while simultaneously preventing the acknowledgment of others.

Where statements exploiting the final vocabulary attempt to bring together political ideology and the objects of Swedish design, most lines of enunciation are less straightforward in their operations. Instead they manifest more prominently as *preoccupations*, concerns that circulate around

design, designers, and designing practices without tangibly settling on particular materialities. During the height of the Swedish welfare state in the 1960s and 1970s, this was particularly evident in the pressing social questions tackled by popular design periodicals like *Form*, the official publication of the Swedish Society of Arts and Crafts. Throughout most of the 1970s each issue would be devoted to a particular theme, introduced on the cover by a provocative question and addressed through in-depth articles and images within. For instance, one issue in 1970 dealing with design for the elderly asked, "Can we live how we want when we grow old?" Another from 1974 asked, alongside a montage of nine "typical" Swedish faces, "Is the family changing?" (the short answer, according to the articles inside: maybe). And an issue from the following year explored cases in both Sweden and *u-landet*, the developing world, to answer the question, "Is society child-friendly?" Very little of the text contained in these publications, and similar others of the period, utilized the final vocabulary to describe the work and objects of Swedish designers. Nonetheless by intently confronting the very sorts of problems that progenitors of the final vocabulary like Paulsson had earlier argued should be the central concern of design, the old lines of enunciation retained the same fundamental profile, even if the paths they followed and the pitch of their curves had shifted just a bit.

Today the statements that articulate these lines of enunciation, suffused with tones of equality, social justice, and care precisely dispatched though functionality, beauty, and simplicity, have become utterly taken-for-granted qualities of *svensk design*, in terms of both how it is done by designers and how it is normatively understood—so much so that most designers, as I will discuss in chapter 3, do not align with these statements as explicit aspects of what they do. These statements also appear quite frequently in various mediated contexts, a "murmur without beginning or end" (Deleuze 1988:7) that consistently and regularly reproduces a publicly shared and recognizable discursive field. In Stockholm and other cities, design has all but saturated the urban landscape. Magazines delineating lines of enunciation, like *Form*—but also a number of others, like *Forum, Hemma*, and *Arkitekten*—aimed at both popular and professional audiences, are regularly sold at newsstands and convenience stores. Images of various household goods, high-tech objects, interiors, or even designers themselves adorn their covers, while descriptive articles inside dissect the intricate meanings

of design, including the Swedish and Scandinavian types. Indeed, there is a certain reflexive, almost self-obsessed tenor permeating much of the media attention that surrounds design in Sweden. Books both large and small showcasing the best of historical and contemporary Scandinavian design or instructing readers how to decorate their homes modernly and efficiently are prominently displayed in major bookshops, and many department stores construct—and proudly exhibit—entire sections of floors devoted specifically to "Swedish design." But as indispensable as these lines of enunciation are to the integrity of the diagram of Swedish design, they trace out only part of the picture.

Lines of Visibility: The Cultural Geometry

Of course what is articulable about design must be articulable about something in particular. Lines of enunciation, statements about Swedish design, are only, in their barest forms, claims about the sociopolitical status of objects. There is nothing inherently "correct" in the claims themselves, no infallible logic that makes them indisputably credible. Like any claim, lines of enunciation require evidence and argumentation in order to bend toward persuasion. They need something to cling to, to adhere to, something that somehow scaffolds their propositional content in ways that, at least provisionally, grant the premise outlined by the final vocabulary an anchor in material reality. They need other lines, lines of a different sort, with which to intersect.

For Deleuze (1988) lines of enunciation are counterbalanced by what he calls lines of visibility, or what can be seen. These lines sketch out the domain of the sensible, the surfaces, planes, and curves that compose the silhouette of the materially experienceable, and give weight, size, and shape to matter and substance. They are diffuse and immanent in the everyday world, yet while "visibilities are never hidden, they are none the less not immediately seen or visible" (Deleuze 1988:57), lingering unnoticed and unremarked in the basic structure of spaces and things. They are also not strictly a visual phenomenon, but rather "are complexes of actions and passions, actions and reactions, multisensorial complexes, which emerge into the light of day" (59) through mediated interactions that call them into being.

Elsewhere I have called these lines of visibility the "cultural geometry" of Swedish design (Murphy 2013), the basic set of form preferences that constitute the core qualities of what emerged over the twentieth century as Swedish style. These preferences—dominated by straight lines, clear angles, and simple curves—are often associated with modernist aesthetics in design, art, and architecture more generally, the origins of which can be pinned to a number of non-Swedish sources, including the World's Fair of 1851, the Arts and Crafts movement, the Deutscher Werkbund, and most notably the Bauhaus school in Germany (Crouch 1999; see below).[1] It is an aesthetic regime that is "Calvinist in its rigor" (Goldhagen 2005:144), firmly committed to the unambiguous disavowal of constructions overburdened by complexity as a means for advancing a particular political agenda: constructing a new social world made up of "objective" forms freed from the constraining class markers associated with older styles. According to the logic of modernist design, minimalist forms provoke minimal social distinctions, and thus fit comfortably within broader political programs aimed at dismantling class hierarchies and other social configurations of inequality.

While modernist forms came to characterize design and architecture globally in the twentieth century, in Sweden they assumed the status of what Jan Mukarovsky (1977:53) calls a "technical norm," or "certain habits, petrified residues of the long evolution of art." From the 1920s onward, through periods of contestation and revolt and reassessment and embrace, straight lines, squares, rectangles, and cubes—shapes composed of right angles, or near right angles—have ossified as the kinds of forms normatively captured by the "Swedish" part of Swedish design. Since the 1960s, with the advent of ergonomic design, though stemming from even earlier origins, simple curves—not intricate or convoluted, but organic, following the bends of the human body—have also fallen under this label. Symmetry and proportionality are critical as well. The angles and surfaces that arise from the arrangement of basic forms in designed objects should reflect the same kind of simplicity as the component elements. These forms and surfaces can give shape to practically anything, from apartment buildings, chairs, and tables to lamps, cutlery, and the typography marking book covers and public space. Collectively this cultural geometry has become for Swedish design what Roman Jakobson (1971) calls "the dominant" of an

aesthetic work, the abstractable—if not extractable—quality of the thing that specifies its typological character, granting it a sense and identity of its own. Not everything designed and produced in Sweden is based in the cultural geometry, of course. But inasmuch as the cultural geometry manifests as the dominant, if not exclusive quality of the everyday built environment, in both public and private spaces, it substantiates most directly the lines of visibility that, together with lines of enunciation, constitute the diagram of Swedish design.

From one point of view, the straight lines, right angles, and simple curves that dominate Swedish design amount to what Robin Evans (1995) calls a "dead geometry," forms so worked over, so thoroughly understood that they no longer incite interest or experimentation. They are predictable and expected, a known quantity, and routine. But from another perspective their very predictability is precisely their strength. Through decades of use in innumerable designed cultural objects, the integrity of these forms is thoroughly means tested, a ubiquitous "inoculation against uncertainty" (Evans 1995:xxvii) in the everyday world and a material analogue of the careful, positive rationality that underpins social democratic ideology. In Sweden the fundamental building blocks of design—point, line, and plane—have been transfigured and reassembled into critical vectors of cultural value. A once-dead metric geometry of mere distances and structures flourishes vibrantly as a projective geometry thick with shadows and images textured and given conceptual mass by lines of enunciation.

For these different sorts of lines to hold together as a diagram of design, as a materialized depiction of the Swedish social imaginary, there must be some semiotic tolerance (Murphy 2013) between the dead geometrical forms and the ideological claims that revitalize them. This is not to say that there is always a clear and direct match—indeed, as we will see, the matching of lines is an ongoing cultural achievement—but rather that there must be qualities of both that at least credibly correspond in experience. There is a basic consonance between "simple" forms and democratic idealism. They are raw and unelaborated, the rudiments of form, really, and are thus less prone to class-restricted appropriations. However, the dominant manifestation of this correspondence is the cultural geometry's capacity to reflect and perform two core values of social democratic ideology, *trygghet* (security) and *omsorg* (care), and to do so along at least three

dimensions, the first of which is security and care through *economics*. Minimalist forms like straight lines and right angles are easier to mass-produce than more complicated shapes. They are easier to machine-cut, and easier to transport—both from factory to store and from store to home—all of which tends to reduce costs for consumers.

The second dimension is security and care through *functionality*. Functional design does not strictly mean that an object *does* something (a stopwatch as opposed to a lapel pin), but more that an object works to address a perceived problem, and does so in an obvious and rational way. For instance, one designer I talked to named Petra S.[2] noticed that water would pool on her garden table after a rainstorm, and the table would have to be drained and cleaned to be used again. As a solution to this problem she devised a small circular table with a short ridge along the tabletop's edge to capture the rainwater like a shallow bowl; she also included a small notch in the ridge to channel the water off the tabletop. But rather than allowing the water to pour down onto the ground, she designed a small bowl, attached to the table's base directly under the notch, which collected the rainwater and repurposed it as a water source for local birds, an ecologically conscious solution solved through a new implementation of the cultural geometry. Moreover, ergonomic design relies on curves to provide for users quite directly through objects that are, for example, crafted to conform to the contours of human hands or the curves of human backs, thus making interactions with everyday things more comfortable and less stressful on the body.

A third dimension of the correspondence between form and care—a kind of *psychological* care—is achieved through a particular culturally elaborated conception of beauty. Since the late nineteenth century, beauty has been discursively linked to simplicity of form in Sweden, along with the parallel promotion of interaction with beautiful things as a means for engendering happiness in everyday life (see chapter 2). To craft beautiful objects, to create environments that resonate with positive aesthetic details, is to attend to the affective well-being of people who use those objects and inhabit those spaces. As a designer named Jenny L. explained it, expressing an alternative to overt political descriptions of design, "It could be as interesting to say, 'Ah, this furniture is all about the world, and the people and the emotions in the world. . . . It's beautiful, it's a happy life! I want you to be a little bit more happy,' or whatever." Playing the part of "an active engineer of atmosphere," to borrow Jean Baudrillard's (1996:25) phrase, a designer working with the cultural geometry helps construct a secure and caring everyday world precisely by giving beautiful forms, simple forms, to her objects.

Drawing the Lines Together

But as I have been saying from the start, this is all a kind of cultural achievement. The lamination of ideological claims to specific forms, the twisting together of lines of enunciation and visibility to form a materialized diagram of social relations—in other words, to produce something meaningful called *design*, and in this case called *svensk design*—requires a tremendous amount of work from a range of social actors, from designers to activists to curators, policymakers, artists, professors, consumers, and others. It requires an ongoing commitment to *form giving* of all different sorts, with all sorts of material across all sorts of domains. As Tim Ingold (2010a, 2010b, 2012) has argued, a focus on creativity that narrowly emphasizes an archaic Aristotelian "hylomorphic" model, which treats matter (*hyle*) and form (*morphe*) as distinct phenomena, unproductively reduces "making" to the actions of goal-oriented producers pressing pregiven forms onto pregiven materials. It is a position that grants too much agency to both creators and the completed artifacts they produce, without accounting in any serious way for the "fields of force and currents of material wherein forms are generated" (2010b:92). Too heavy an emphasis on inert, artificial "objects" over the matter that constitutes "things"—which he describes as a "gathering together of the threads of life" (Ingold 2010a:4)—leads us to overlook the constituent elemental qualities that accord those objects their social vitality. Building from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Ingold (2012:433) argues alternatively that "the generation of things should be understood as a process of ontogenesis in which form is ever emergent rather than given in advance." From this point of view, then, the role of the expert creator—the designer, the curator, the journalist—is not to impose form onto matter, but instead to guide the *becoming* of things by channeling "fields of force and currents of material" in considered ways that shape and fashion a novel configuration of existence.

Unlike the kinds of artistic production that Ingold is primarily concerned with, design is typically a much more dispersed and elongated

creative process. Beyond prototyping and small handmade production runs, designers typically spend more time in their studios giving forms in pixels, ink, and hand gestures than in the matter that composes their objects. And besides, designers are not the only ones giving forms to objects, since the work of other players in the Swedish design world is absolutely critical to shaping the overall contours of design. Ingold forcefully maintains that in critiquing hylomorphism his goal is not simply to identify the model's weakest points, but "to overthrow the model itself, and to replace it with an ontology that assigns primacy to processes of formation as against their final products, and to flows and transformations of materials as against states of matter" (Ingold 2010a:2–3). To be sure, this is a virtuous proposition, one that has helped pattern the trajectory of my analysis. But what is left unclear in this move is the status of matter and especially of form as empirical entities, for both anthropologists and our interlocutors. Creation may not entail the imposition of pregiven forms onto pregiven matter, but design as a kind of creation makes clear that forms, at least, do subsist in and circulate through domains beyond those in which formation processes are distinctly marked, like the studio. Challenging the ways in which we conceive of the relations between form and matter is critical for advancing a more refined understanding of the meaning of things in their cultural contexts, but it should be done with a sensitivity to the ways in which forms often live their own cultural lives independent of the things they in turn help enliven.

Form giving is emergent from the many vagaries of production, from the tiny little motions of putting hands, tools, and machinery to material; from talk about the thing itself and the other things it is somehow "like," or "not like," according to the various stakeholders who intervene in its making; from the interlocked cultural, social, functional, and political statements that help shape things as they are "born" and into which they are thrown, even if against their will; and from the ways in which things are rhetorically displayed, the ways in which lines of enunciation are trued with lines of visibility. While individual things are truly made in instances of production, they are also, especially though not exclusively in the context of mass production, *remade* as specimens of a type that displays a particular form and a particular function, and can "reflect" the same kinds of meanings and associations as every other specimen. Making things that

conform to a type with particular indexical associations is what Asif Agha (2003) calls "enregisterment," or

> social processes—processes of value production, maintenance and transformation—through which the scheme of cultural values has a social life, as it were, a processual and dynamic existence that depends on the activities of social persons, linked to each other through discursive interactions and institutions. . . . Cultural value is not a static property of things or people but a precipitate of sociohistorically locatable practices, including discursive practices, which imbue cultural forms with recognizable sign-values and bring these values into circulation along identifiable trajectories in social space. (Agha 2003:231–232)

In other words, treating design as a kind of enregisterment, as a dynamic set of interrelated processes of value production, reveals that making things mean in a cultural way is the result of activities carried out by asymmetrically distributed actors tasked with reproducing, preserving, and augmenting indexical connections between forms and other meaningful entities—objects, people, places, ideas, relations, and so on. It is here, in the practical activities and procedures that relentlessly suture sign to object, and do so in a range of contexts, that cultural value resides, rather than in the things themselves or the wider contexts that they inhabit. To be sure, stitching together lines of visibility and lines of enunciation is by no means a neat affair. Because these lines are ontologically quite distinct—"anisomporphic," as Deleuze describes them—their integrity as a complete whole is rather imprecise, "the result of a certain 'jiggery-pokery'" (Deleuze 1988:62) rather than consistent compatibility. Deleuze (65) notes further: "Between the two there is a perpetual irrational break. And yet they are not any old voices on top of any old images. Of course, there is no link that could move from the visible to the statement, or from the statement to the visible. But there is a continual relinking that takes place over the irrational break or the crack."

This relinking over the crack between the visible and the articulable, between forms and ideologies of design in Sweden, is what the rest of this book will explore. In what follows I present four different "enregistering machines" of Swedish design—and these are only four among innumerable others. In processing relations between bodies, enregistering machines

do not simply *give* lines and forms; they also give *to each other* lines and forms that are otherwise anisomorphic, such that something new emerges in their comingling. Each of these enregistering machines is composed of its own constituent parts and operates according to its own logic. Each also processes and produces its own material for its own ends. Yet because of their particular relational configurations in Swedish society, they all work together, unorchestrated but still in concert, to continuously redraw the diagram of Swedish design.

Untangling the Swedishness of Swedish Design

To understand the ways in which the diagram of Swedish design has emerged and persists requires some attention to the particularities of how each of these sets of lines has developed in relation to wider sociopolitical contexts outside Swedish borders. The lines of enunciation and visibility of Swedish design do bear similarities to both political forms and design forms apparent in other national contexts, and I am not claiming that Swedish design is a singular phenomenon in the world. Indeed, I am arguing that it is a manifestation—and a relatively clear one at that—of a more general set of complex relations between objects, ideologies, practices, and people that hold in many sociopolitical contexts, each with its own particular local contingencies. To unpack how design has been "made Swedish" in Sweden, then, means turning to the specifics of both social democracy and modernist design in Sweden and beyond.

Social Democracy in Sweden and Elsewhere

As a political form, social democracy is of course not unique to Sweden. It has origins in strains of Marxist thought that spread throughout Europe in the nineteenth century, and it began taking shape differently in many countries over the course of the twentieth century, especially in the fractured aftermath of World War II (Padgett and Paterson 1991). And while a preoccupation with "welfare" is generally considered a hallmark of social democratic political systems, it is not solely the purview of Social Democratic parties, as the influence of those parties has seeped into a variety

of political contexts. As Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990) has argued, "liberal" welfare states, like Canada, Australia, and the United States (Hacker 2002: cf. Fennell 2011, 2012) have tended to promote a minimalist welfare program through market-driven mechanisms designed to address "basic rights," while "corporatist" welfare states, like Germany, France, and Austria, are more likely to use the power of the state—often in complicated collusions with the church—to protect the rights of citizens without universalizing them or engineering away status differences. However, in contrast to these models, only "the social democrats pursued a welfare state that would promote an equality of the highest standards, not an equality of minimal needs" (Esping-Andersen 1990:27), and the Nordic countries—Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland—are where social democrats have held the most sway.

In the various national contexts in which social democrats have thrived, the ideas and values underpinning social democracy share a number of core features (Esping-Andersen 1985), most of which differ in their degree of emphasis within a given political system and the mechanisms through which welfare is provided. The most common of these include the provision of particular public services, like health care and public education, poverty reduction programs, labor protections, and a recognition of the right of collective bargaining. And in states historically controlled by Social Democratic parties there is typically a more explicit emphasis on promoting social equality, class solidarity (as opposed to class struggle, as advocated by Communist parties), and social reformism through parliamentary democracy. In all of these respects Swedish social democracy fits a normative model of the social democratic political form.

At the same time, though, social democracy has developed in some very particular ways in Sweden, even in relation to the other Nordic countries, marking Sweden more as the exception than the ideal. The Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP) was the first social democratic party in the world to take control of government through an electoral process, and despite having lost control of government in 2006, it remains the most successful social democratic party in history, having continuously served as the largest party in the Riksdag (the Swedish parliament) since 1917. In its early days, while social democratic parties elsewhere in Europe grappled with how exactly to align with some core issues of orthodox Marxism, including

class struggle and historical materialism, the SAP instead adopted class cooperation, a flattening of social hierarchies, and cross-class inclusion as core party values. Indeed, in contrast to social democratic parties in Germany and France, the SAP was decidedly undogmatic about its Marxism. Whereas these other social democratic parties, working in a more Marxist vein, viewed democracy as a bourgeois approach to reform (Berman 2006:155), in Sweden the SAP saw democracy as a pragmatic and primary mechanism for enacting social change.

Another significant factor influencing the development of social democracy in Sweden was the state's political posture during both world wars. In the aftermath of World War I, but especially in the context of the global depression of the 1930s, Sweden was in a more or less equal position to other countries in Europe. Sweden had been neutral during the war, but was also much less industrialized and developed than European countries to the south, so despite not having suffered much direct damage during the conflict, the country was nonetheless in similar need of rebuilding. The interwar years, as Sheri Berman (2006) has forcefully argued, served as a political incubator in Europe where emerging parties espousing utterly distinct ideologies all sought to solve the social and economic problems that the war and depression had wrought, through a number of shared basic goals. Both left-wing parties (the Social Democrats) and right-wing parties (the National Socialist Party in Germany, the Fascists in Italy) were fundamentally concerned with reshaping society from the ground up, primarily through the political process; they all also emphasized collective solidarity and the role of "the people" in each party's development; and they were all explicitly in favor of constructing a middle way between socialism and capitalism. Of course the left-wing and right-wing parties diverged drastically beyond these fundamentals, and for much of the 1930s into 1945 it was not clear whether a left-leaning democratic or a right-leaning authoritarian orientation to social reform would prevail in Europe. The Nazis outlawed social democratic parties in all of the countries they occupied, including Denmark and Norway, but social democracy was able to survive and thrive in Sweden because of the state's official neutral status. Thus while the development of social democracy in Sweden greatly benefited from a Pan-European wave of reformist political sentiment in the 1920s and 1930s, the system was able to ride out Axis imperialism in the early 1940s, which in turn led to the entrenchment of social democratic policies

occurring earlier there than in other Nordic countries whose social democratic frameworks, unlike Sweden's, required considerable reconstruction following the war.

Finally, from the start the SAP exhibited a strong dedication to forwarding social reform through technocratic empiricism, a faith in the power of research that other social democratic parties of the early twentieth century lacked (Berman 2006). Rather than assuming the role of vanguard party and treating the desires and beliefs of party leadership as dogma, the SAP initiated a program of targeted, rational social improvement in which problems were identified and studied, and reforms were implemented based on the results of those studies. By approaching reform in this incrementalist manner the Social Democrats broke strongly from their original Marxist influence. Whereas in Russia, for instance, revolution had been kickstarted into existence, its unfolding accelerated by a political movement too impatient to wait, the SAP preferred to slow the revolution down, to forge it piecemeal, bit by bit, allowing enough time to consider each problem on its own, each process used to address the problem, and all of the potential consequences of reshaping society as that reshaping unfolded.

And in this project design was critical. As modernist design spread from Germany to other parts of Europe, both its forms and ideologies of social transformation tended to remain, to some degree, as it was adopted. But in Sweden, modernism found a home, literally and discursively, that was largely unrivaled in other countries.

Modernist Design in Sweden and Beyond

The origins of modernist design in the first few decades of the twentieth century are most often associated with a small number of personalities and institutions, including architects Le Corbusier in France and Walter Gropius and his Bauhaus school in Germany. Known eventually as the International Style, or Neue Sachlichkeit (The New Objectivity) in German, European modernist design would become the twentieth century's "most concentrated systematization of surface" (Ward 2001:9), a style dominated by simple forms that spread from Germany to other parts of Europe, including Sweden, and to the United States, where it mixed with both indigenous American modernist styles and consumer capitalism, and then eventually to the rest of the world. While its origins can be traced back to

at least the late nineteenth century, modernist design began to flourish in Europe most strongly in the immediate aftermath of World War I. The war itself had represented a distinct point of transition between old traditional warfare technologies like horses and rifles, and more modern machines like tanks, airplanes, and flame throwers, whose destructive power left most of Europe, and especially Germany, in ruins. In the face of the widespread devastation of both population and infrastructure, modernist design, partly influenced by the technological advances that drove much of the fighting during the war, emerged as a means by which the reconstruction of German society could take place.

The Bauhaus school, founded in Weimar, Germany, in 1919 under the leadership of Walter Gropius, became the foremost institutional progenitor of modernist architecture and design, in Germany and beyond, during its short existence. Originally focused on projects as varied as architecture, textiles, painting, and typography crafted without any particular specificity of style, over the course of the 1920s Bauhaus instructors increasingly developed an emergent functionalism—a simplicity of form, an acceptance of mass production, an eschewal of unnecessary ornament—as their dominant design framework. This turn was in part motivated by the usefulness of mass-production technologies that functioned most efficiently with simple forms, but also by a strong desire to sever connections with the staid, elaborate forms associated with Germany's long imperial past. Modernist architecture and design, it was hoped, so visually distinct from what came before, would give new form to a brand new world.

But this was not to be, at least not in Germany. Having thrived during the brief democratic period of the Weimar Republic, the Bauhaus shuttered its activities in 1933, under pressure from the new Nazi government, forcing many of its prominent members, including architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, to flee to the United States. Then in 1937, in the same political move that simultaneously identified and censored so-called degenerate art, the Nazi regime banned functionalism and the International Style in architecture and design. In direct opposition to modernism's break from Germany's past, Hitler and his principal architect, Alfred Speer, imposed dominating neoclassical architectural forms in an attempt to signal the strength and power of the German nation by visually referencing ancient Roman styles. In that same vein Hitler and his minister of propaganda

Joseph Goebbels banned the use of most modern typefaces in graphic design, relying instead on the heavy use of Fraktur, an old Germanic variant of a Gothic font whose form had been linked to German-language printing for centuries. Yet despite Hitler's explicit antimodernist orientation and the imposition of *völkisch* aesthetics, a minimal pluralism of design styles did manage to persist in Nazi Germany (Aynsley 2000; Betts 2002; Miller Lane 1968). Even Goebbels himself saw the utility of functionalism's emphasis on simplicity and reduction of form for effectively reaching large numbers of people (Welch 1983). Nonetheless, the period from 1933 to 1945 represented a severe suppression, if not outright withdrawal, of modernist design in Germany.

Following the end of the war, functionalism was given an initial brief reprieve in the East. In another attempt to use design style as a visible line of differentiation separating the current regime from its predecessor, the Soviets, intent on expelling the *völkisch* styles promoted by the Nazis, invited formerly evicted Bauhaus-trained architects and designers to settle and work in the East (Rubin 2006). This renewed enthusiasm for modernism was short-lived, however, and by 1950 the ruling Socialist Unity Party rejected functionalism as overly imperialist and internationalist, and as such not sufficiently connected to the German nation they hoped to revive (Ulrich 2004). This proclamation led to a ban on modernist design for the first half of the 1950s, but this ban, like the previous bout of enthusiasm, was also short-lived. Recognizing that the need for managing a large population through modern mass-production methods outweighed the ideological restrictions on modernist design, the East German government lifted the ban in 1956, and by the 1960s the popularity of functionalist goods exploded in the East (Rubin 2006).

In the West the trajectory was a little different. As in the East, modernism was reintroduced to distance the current regime from associations with the Nazis, and soon enough "industrial design emerged as a primary site for fronting a new West German cultural order" (Betts 2004:2). Yet unlike what unfolded in Sweden starting in the 1930s, and what at least lightly concerned members of the original Bauhaus, functionalism in West Germany was less oriented toward advancing class solidarity through everyday design and more conspicuously linked to liberal ideologies of consumer capitalism primarily imported from the United States. As

Czech-born, American art historian Lorenz Eitner described the state of industrial design in West Germany in the late 1950s,

> For all the publicity which "modern design" has received in Germany, industrial products designed with originality and a sense of beauty continue to be rare and expensive. In industrial design, as in other forms of art, modernity remains the prerogative of the unusually discerning or the unusually rich. (Eitner 1957:3).

In other words, whereas in Scandinavia and East Germany modern design was initially entangled (though in different ways) with an inclusive concept of "the people" or "the masses," in postwar West Germany it assumed a more explicit association with cultures of consumption and industrialism, in particular in the case of internationally recognized brands like Braun and Volkswagen.

After reunification in 1989, while both East and West had embraced and developed their own versions of modernist design during the years of separation, realigning these modernisms as part of *die Wende* turned out to be a rather difficult process. One symptom of this difficulty was manifest in a variant of *nostalgie* (Boyer 2006), a widespread cultural nostalgia felt by former East Germans for life in the East, which in some cases would settle on particular objects, often those from the post-1960s modernist period, and the affective associations they evoked (Berdahl 1999; Betts 2000; cf. Fehérváry 2009, 2013). Thus despite both East and West forwarding versions of modernist design during the Cold War, the years following *die Wende* revealed just how different those modernisms had been.

Italy, too, eventually embraced modernist design, though its course there both parallels and diverges from the German case.[3] As in Germany, the period immediately following World War I saw the rise of a dictatorial political party—the Fascists, led by Benito Mussolini—whose leaders viewed design and architecture as both significant visual representations of political power and critical mechanisms of governance. But unlike in Germany there had been no indigenous school of art and design equivalent to the Bauhaus, or at least none as prominent and productive—and thus threatening to the ascendant Fascist regime.

Mussolini himself, like Hitler, was partial to neoclassical architecture, and the claim to a long lineage extending back to ancient Rome was a central component of the Fascists' overwhelming nationalist and

imperialist project. But unlike Hitler, Mussolini was not explicitly antimodernist. As an associate of Filippo Marinetti, the founder of Italian futurism, Mussolini was deeply influenced by avant-garde movements in art, literature, and fashion, and subscribed to a number of futurist ideologies, including a faith in technology and industrialism, and a reliance on violence for achieving desired political goals (Doordan 1995). He also embraced mass-production methods developed by Henry Ford in the United States, treating them as essential for the success of Fascism's new corporatist economic system designed to overcome the weaknesses of both Marxism and capitalism. Meanwhile, in contrast to the liberal period before the 1920s, the Fascist regime was initially decidedly isolationist, promoting trade primarily within imperial boundaries rather than in international markets. One result of this was that while the ideas and objects of modernist design spread from Germany to other countries in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, they had little early purchase in Italy. Indeed, not until after the war, in the 1950s, did modernist aesthetics begin appearing in Italian design, but rather than entering through Germany, these new styles mostly surfaced through the influence of American consumer capitalism—and, as in West Germany, it was largely stripped of socially oriented ideological readings that had survived and thrived in Scandinavia.

Modernist forms of one kind or another have appeared, circulated, transformed, and disappeared in various national cultural contexts throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, but they of course have not lived the same sorts of lives in all of those environments. Even in Germany, the most significant site for modernist design's early cultivation, there has not been a consistent relationship between the style's core forms, their political meanings, and the kinds of work these forms are mobilized to do—including under one (at least nominally) consistent political regime. What the German and Italian cases reveal is that even in countries internationally recognized today for their successful modernist design projects, the integration of design, politics, and the everyday world is always variable and contingent. Moreover, a historiographical orientation to the sociopolitical qualities of design that simply lumps together forms (e.g., modernism) and ideologies (e.g., welfare politics) because of surface similarities visible at one point in time does not do justice to the consequential cultural and historical particularities that contribute to design's role in shaping a given society.