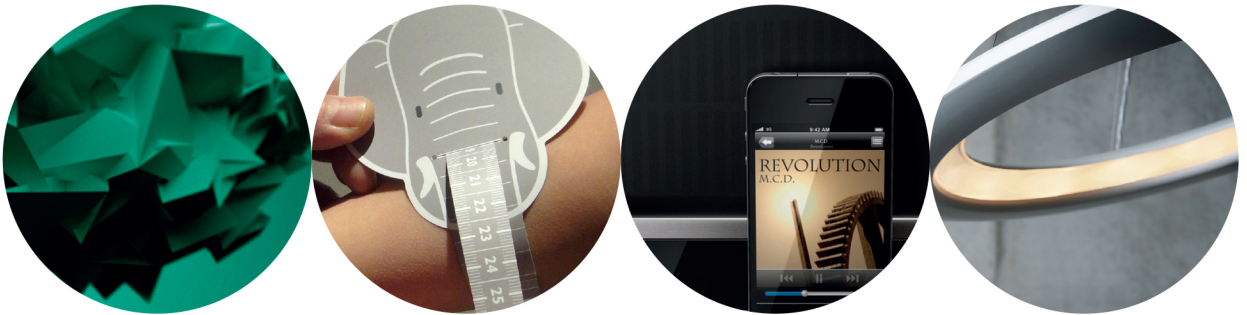


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KEYNOTE

THE ART OF TRENDS



INSTEAD OF JUST GIVING YOU A LIST OF THE MOST INTERESTING, INSPIRING UPCOMING TRENDS, I HAVE DECIDED NOT TO DO SO. INSTEAD I WANT TO EXPLAIN THE 'ART' OF TRENDS, THE BEAUTY OF IT, THE STRENGTH AND THE POTENTIAL, THE THEORY OF TRENDS SO TO SPEAK. WE ALL KNOW TRENDS BY NOW – I DO NOT HAVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE MEGA CHANGES SUCH AS THE AGEING SOCIETY, URBANISATION AND THE 'INTERNET OF THINGS'. I ALSO ASSUME THAT YOU EASILY RECOGNISE TERMS LIKE URBAN FARMING, CROWDSOURCING AND SLOW FOOD. NO, I DO NOT HAVE TO TELL YOU WHAT THE TRENDS ARE, AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW THEM AS WELL AS I DO.

The internet is providing us with *exabytes* of information every day. News travels faster and now has an extremely short lifespan. Being a trend watcher back in the day, we had to wait. Wait for the new magazines in the news stand, wait for the fairs and events like the Milan Furniture Fair, and wait for the new brochures. News and knowledge had high value, sources were everything. How different it is now. Information is everywhere. It is not so much a question about the what, but more an issue of the *quality* (Is it true? Where does it come from?), and the *why* (Why is this happening?).

To elaborate more on this I will give you an example. Every year Pantone chooses the colour of the year. Pantone is one of the biggest colour systems in the world. Their samples are used for indicating and visualising specific colors in the world of fashion and design. For 2013 a turquoise kind of hue was chosen – called Emerald. Hopefully a process like this is starting to happen in your head right now: Why was this color chosen? What was the reason? What is the story? So what?

The what? Is the color itself, the Emerald. This is what we see. The reason *why* this color was chosen according to Pantone: (..) *‘the color of growth, renewal and prosperity, no other color conveys regeneration more than green. For centuries, many countries have chosen green to represent healing and unity’*. (<http://au.pantone.com/pages/index.aspx?pg=21055>) (figure 1 and 1a) Emerald might represent itself to be a colour of hope, a signal of longing for better times. Will this colour indicate a new shift? A new time where everything

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will be better again? Will we have prosperity? That particular process of analysing is my main responsibility at Philips Design. It is not so much the what? I need to provide, I have to find out why?

Why is the why so important? In our case at Philips Design it is our goal and responsibility to *‘Create business opportunity by connecting people insights with technology to deliver new enriched user experiences’*. (www.design.philips.com/philips/sites/philipsdesign/about/design/aboutus/creative_force.page) It is our aim to be people centric. (figure 2) (www.design.philips.com/philips/sites/philipsdesign/about/design/designnews/newvaluebydesign/february2012/fight_malnutrition.page)

Philips Design is one of the oldest and biggest design agencies in the world. Being part of Philips we are responsible for design innovation and execution of the total product and service portfolio, (figure 3). Located in eight cities in the world, we work with a mix of over 30 nationalities. We strongly believe in a multidisciplinary environment. Designers used to do everything, from design to engineering to packaging, (figure 4), but now design has become more specific. All the steps in the design process, from innovative idea to almost ready to sell, are now separated into so called capabilities. We now have over 30 of them, each representing a specific expertise needed.

Not only has that change significantly improved our way of working, we have also become a strategic partner as a design function. This means that we are not just about making things pretty and attractive aesthetic wise, but we also have a seat at the decision-making table.

Being this partner we are participating during the whole process, from the

fuzzy front end, where new directions and platforms are being defined, to the design realisation of existing product portfolios. Including the full 360 degree branding that goes beyond product, such as online presence and launch events.

Part of our work is to provide a future vision, to visualise and express what the future could hold for us. You can talk about the future, but for many people it stays vague and intangible. They cannot imagine what it will look like and therefore how it will affect their life. In some of our research we try to make this future vision visible by generating insights and exploring far-future lifestyle scenarios based on rigorous research in a wide range of areas, culminating in a ‘provocation’ designed to spark discussion and debate around new ideas and lifestyle concepts.

For example, Microbial Home, (figure 5), a Philips Design research project, consisted of a domestic ecosystem that challenged conventional design solutions to energy, cleaning, food preservation, lighting and human waste. We explored the possibility that the answer to our environmental challenges might come from biological processes, which are less energy consuming and non-polluting. It seems we might need to go back to nature to move forward.

These kinds of projects pick up a weak signal, trends of a faraway future. Then instead of trying to predict how and when these trends might happen, they aim to trigger a debate. The ‘what if’ becomes a provocation, something to discuss. It’s about testing the future by making it visible. This testing gives us so-called future insights, as if these prototypes really exist. It helps test whether this future innovation has relevance to people.

Everybody talks about innovation these days. Innovation can start from many



angles like technology development or people insights. But is what we come up with always meaningful? What makes a proposition, an idea, meaningful? It is often not the technology by itself that has a meaning; it is an enabler to make something happen. A good example for this is a lamp for public spaces designed by Timo Niskanen, (figure 6). Taking a closer look at this lamp one can spot the elegant minimal design and a light tube that is slim and graphical in its appearance. But looking even closer the lamp reveals its story. The light can only be put on by placing a coin on it, and can only be turned off by removing it. It seems to be very difficult for people to remember to turn off the light when leaving a public space like a library. The concept makes people more aware of the impact it has when leaving the light on. They pay, not only from a financial perspective but also environmentally. That story makes the lamp a meaningful innovation. It makes people think and at the same time, hopefully, act and change their behaviour.

Instead of just focusing on the technologic innovation we need to find out what it is that is driving people and why this is happening. The relevance of trends is strongly connected to being people centric, (figure 7) (www.design.philips.com/sites/philipsdesign/about/design/designportfolio/design_for_healthcare/labor_and_delivery_experience_concept.page) That is the reason trend research is a fundamental part of our innovation process. So how do we do it?

A trend can be best described as an expression of a change that is about to happen. Trends are about change, and change is the only constant in life – *Ἡράκλειτος (Herakleitos; Heraclitus) of Ephesus (c.535 BC-475 BC)*. So in order to do trend research we have to know why a certain change is happening. In times like these, with an overload of information, this is not an easy task.

Trend research used to be relatively simple. One would just look at the

skirts of women! It seemed to be a serious measurement tool. The hemline index, as it was called, was a prognosis of stock prices going up or down, indicated by the position of the hemline. Wartime austerity in the forties was expressed by skirts below the knee, and a flourishing economy in the sixties was visible by the length of miniskirts. But more recent fashion shows have presented a large variety of skirts, so you can no longer speak of just one code. Or does this represent the turbulent times we are in, and that future directions are unclear?

Turbulent times we are in, complex too, but very exciting at the same time. It is as if we are now forced to drastically change our behaviour because of serious environmental issues, the economic crisis, and the growing lack of trust we have in traditional instructions like governments and yes, brands too. Changing behavior was a choice for a long time, now it seems a necessity.



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What does this change look like? What kind of change are we talking about? Below I will give a few inspiring and promising examples of change.

Bosco Verticale is an architectural concept for the city of Milan which is one of the most polluted cities in Europe. Bosco Verticale is a model of vertical densification of nature within the city. Residential towers are covered with rich plant life. The diversity of the plants and their characteristics produce humidity, absorb CO2 and dust particles, produce oxygen and protect the building from radiation and acoustic pollution. This not only improves the quality of living spaces, but gives way to dramatic energy savings year round. Here sustainability and the concern about pollution at large are obvious reasons for this development. But at the same time people want to merge nature with the city to increase the livability.

This manifestation has a strong link with what is happening in China, where

rooftops of buildings in cities are taken over by residents, mostly people who moved from rural areas to the city. They miss contact with nature and the ability of having fresh and home grown vegetables. These 'illegal' activities are somehow accepted by the government which has now started to reward this behavior in terms of subsidies. They see the clear (and numerous) benefits of having green roofs, such as food for a growing population and cooling of the city.

This 'hacking' (taking over) is a global trend and manifests itself in many ways. It is also strongly enabled by technology. **Blue Brain**, a New York initiative created an app that allows you, when walking in Central Park, to listen to music that is 'placed' there. A more controversial approach was created by Dutch artist Sander Veenhof who placed digital artworks in the MOMA New York without permission. With a special app people could see the artworks by making use of augmented reality.



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So if we see this hacking behaviour emerging and more and more examples popping up, what does this mean? And most importantly, are these manifestations useful and what can we do with this?

Within Philips Design there are a number of capabilities looking into the future and what this could mean for the Philips brand. We distinguish three groups of experts: visual, lifestyle and foresight. The three represent both a bandwidth in terms of time, taking a perspective from different angles, and used within different parts of the innovation process. **Visual trends**, focusing on design, materials and colors, are defined to inspire and inform design processes. Visual trends often have a lifecycle that is very short. They are mostly seasonal and strongly connected to fashion and style, like certain colours. **Foresight**, based on STEEP (social – technology – economic – ethics – political) trends, is provided to support corporate strategy. These

trends can exist for decades, indicating a long term change in society like, for example ageing society.

Lifestyle trends, research into the behaviour changes of people, are used to inspire and inform people-centric innovation. Lifestyle trends can be placed in between visual trends and foresight. Their lifecycle can be five to seven years, such as slow living or mindfulness. It is in this capability we need to unravel the upcoming changes and where this is rooted. As mentioned before, the landscape of trends has never looked so complicated as today. A comparison with an underground map is easily made. Everything is connected; one does not exist without the other. But what is really important, what stands out and which trends have true value to us? Together with an international network of internal and external experts we define, analyse and deploy global and local trends. We are guiding the company through a complex landscape by using a Philips brand filter and making sense of what we see.

We start with the so called ‘bottom up approach’ by scanning for expressions of change in society considering a particular context, for example cooking and food in Germany. We analyse this expression through what we think is the underlying motivation or need, what the reason is for changing this behaviour. When finding that out, one can link that change to a bigger

driver, a megatrend. When we see multiple signals coming from different areas (such as architecture and food) answering the same need or idea, one can speak of a trend. Laddering back the expressions gives us an insight into where this is coming from, but also the progression of the megatrends that tend to be there for quite some time.

It is not always easy to find opportunities within a megatrend because it is not clear how it will manifest itself and when. By already picking up early signals, this will give us an idea of what the impact will be of this megatrend. The total analysis will give a much richer landscape than ‘just’ a cluster of signals. The aim is not to follow a trend by copying what we see, but instead to define the underlying idea and need, and then try to find the opportunity – what is it that we can offer to answer that upcoming need? By cross linking this with current needs and issues by doing fieldwork (observing, interviewing and triggering people) we can give that issue a future spin.

Going back to the examples of changes and emerging trends I mentioned, the ‘hacking’ trend is represented in many different areas such as architecture and the digital. It is becoming global too, which means this trend is becoming more mature. The underlying need and the behaviour change that it is triggering seem to be rooted in a lack of distrust in institutions, brands and governments.

If needs are not answered by these parties, people will not wait any longer. Strongly supported by technology and social media people are now becoming more free and creative in thinking of their own solutions without help or limitations.

People are now getting used to this feeling of freedom. They increasingly want to be more enabled by brands and institutions. They seek open platforms where they can contribute and share, as well as unfinished products and services that are in a constant beta state that they can improve and personalise. This will have a strong impact on how future services and products will look and makes us rethink future propositions. Instead of following a beaten path, here we start from the root, the driver, and create future proof opportunities that are truly unique.

FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1: Emerald, Pantone.

Figure 1a: Colour of the Year, Pantone.

Figure 2: Finding Malnutrition – People Centric, Philips.

Figure 3: Philips design history. The product is called: Philips Retro Radio ORD7300.

Figure 4: Lirio by Philips Ecliptic.

Figure 5: Microbial home, Philips.

Figure 6: Coin deposit lamp, Timo Niskanen.

Figure 7: Labor and delivery experience concept, Philips.

Figure 8: Active Ride, Philips.

Figure 9: mybuddy, Phillips.

Figure 10: simplygo, Philips.

Figure 11: Respiroics Oxygen, Philips.

