

*rambling around, picking up a scrap lying nearby and asking,
What could this be?*

Everyday resourcefulness:

re-making of frugal materials by non-specialists
-an unfinished resource for making and doing

Since 2005 I have been walking, discovering, appreciating real-world instances of everyday resourcefulness: re-making of frugal materials by non-specialists, from the Asia-Pacific, Europe and Mexico. Often made by hand, by people who care, I have felt delight and moved through encountering these traces of human activities. Instead of being 'designed' by a specialist and manufactured through a system of extractive industries and alienated labour, these are specific human beings' answers to these questions:

'How do I live right now, right here? What can I do with the stuff around me?'

I am slowly gathering, that one thing could be many¹, that "things are not 'fit for their purpose'²"; that "we can use everything for anything in a more or less successful way³"; that improvisation could be a technology⁴; that practicing an appreciative way of seeing could be a source of power⁵; that "building is a special way of suggesting⁶"; that there are many co-existing micro-cosmoses⁷, and "unbounded richness of variations still exist⁸"; that "the earth is a form of writing, a geography of which we had forgotten that we ourselves are the *co*-authors⁹"; that most of the time, we are "starting something we cannot finish¹⁰".

1 A very important thing is not to make up your mind that you are any one thing. -Gertrude Stein

2 Things simply are not 'fit for their purpose'. At one time a flake of flint was fit for the purpose of surgery, and stainless steel is not for the purpose yet. Everything we design and make is an improvisation, a lash-up, something inept and provisional. We live like castaways. -Georges Canguilhem, *Machine and Organism*, in *Incorporations*, 1992.

3 Brandes, Stich & Wender, *Design by Use*, 2009, p55

4 instead of a last resort, Christopher Dell

5 Kaijima, Kuroda & Tsukamoto, *Made in Tokyo*, 2001

6 *BBC for Business*

7 John Wood

8 Editorial, *White Fungus*, Issue 13, 2013

9 Georges Perec, 'co-' added by xin

10 James Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games*, 1986

With this ever-growing resource of making, I hope they could offer loose kindlings for gently speculating, suggesting, dreaming, playfully provoking other possibilities for improvising and modifying your own lives. I am curious what you see in them, and what we could make, together.

My position:

I am a human-being who makes, not a designer. I borrow the art/design idea-ecology and platforms, and enjoy the reflectivity, criticality and constant reinvention of these fields.

My favourite aspect of art/design school is the premise that one could dream up any 'wild' idea and go for it, learning by doing. I want to discover how this premise could be practiced in living, and I would like my research to feed into daily life (my own and other willing individuals).

How I see is framed by my upbringing and experiences: I was born in China, grew up in New Zealand, and now studying in Germany. I studied biology, psychology, fine arts and now design. I also practice dance improvisation, de-monetised living (volunteering for conservation/permaculture, couchsurfing, hitchhiking, frugal eating), and have some experience with self-organisation (an artist-run-space, reading group, collaborations). I often feel like an outsider in various contexts.

Living in Germany is giving me a view of the homogenising forces of neoliberal capitalism, professional specialisation and standardisation. At the same time, I am also deeply impressed by the proliferating grass root organisations, hackers, artist-collectives here, who are building their own community and culture.

I am privileged enough to be crossing different realities, encountering diverse perspectives, and experiencing many ways of making. Through my research, I am realising the art/design school way of making is not the only way. Learning from the 'everyday resourcefulness' research over the last ten years and my own struggles of making ends meet in the present world has given me a specific position, from where the current thesis grows.

While it is easy to critique the capitalist neoliberal production process (alienated labour, extractive/destructive of natural resources, competition) and how designers are co-opted into this system, I find such 'angst' limiting, and instead take a gentler position of looking at the overlooked, allowing myself to learn from other ways of making and being (How Forests Think).

By opening my eyes to how things are ready made by non-specialists, I am imaging how design could be with this broader field of attention.

The (western) design-discourse contains many social-constructions around:

waste/ resource; impoverishment/scarcity/abundance; specialists vs amateurs/informal; intention/misuse; aesthetics, judgements; high/low art etc.

This creates value hierarchies, and feelings between things and people by education, qualifications, status. >>Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*

Straying from this, I have found affinity in the open source/hacker community and Tony Fry's conception of design – which began when man picked up a stone, and is an ongoing process that fuses making, using, destroying, transforming, becoming. We make the world, the world also makes us.

>>Fry, Ingold, Deleuze

I am interested in considering the whole process of a thing, not just when it goes into production. >>design by use (Brandes et al.)

*Design must embrace misunderstandings, mistakes and so-called misuse by people as a source of innovation and a means of improving cultural diversity. (from: First Declaration of the St Moritz Design Summit)
from Non Intentional Design, Uta Brandes and Michael Erthoff 2006
ralf daab, köln*

When does a design finish? Or does it flow through another being, and transform into something else?

Rambling outside the studio, I have been delighted and find hope in these examples of everyday resourcefulness, made by non-specialists. 'Unbounded richness of variations still exist.' >>White Fungus They are showing me the limits of formal design education and possibilities of rethinking 'design':

Perhaps designing new roles of design as empowering, as sharing and thinking for oneself, as a tool and facility for critical reflection and imagination, and improvising with the changing world.

>>*The Serving Library*

>>*Tim Ingold 'Making'*

>>*James Carse, 'infinite game'*

>>*hacker ethics, open source, solidary communities, abundance economics, p2p*

>>*Zhuangzi*

Practical Components

1. field research: walking, seeing, talking, photographing
2. re-looking: drawing, re-making to understand, analyse, reflect
3. play-toolkit (resource 1): photo cards, quotes, objects/materials
4. activities with other beings /making friends: workshops, performative lectures/movements, interviews/writing, reflections
5. digital open resource (resource 2): stories, wiki, small books (writing, interviews), activity documentation; to share and inspire

1. field research: walking, seeing, talking, photographing

2006-2017, New Zealand, Asia-Pacific, EU, Mexico

- ▶ walking:
 - rambling, flaneur, dérive
 - >>*Situationists*
 - visiting, being a stranger in one's own city
 - looking beyond art/design/school realms
- ▶ seeing:
 - reading, learning from...
 - traces of other people's activities
 - 'the street as a living museum/gallery'
 - 'the world where we are all co-authors'
 - ways of seeing, power in observing/embedding oneself
 - >>*Bow Wow, Kon Wajiro, Kyohei Sakaguchi, Chogyam Trungpa: appreciation and delight, values, power to direct one's attention, to discover humour, delight, humane, play*
- ▶ talking, collecting stories (blog)
- ▶ photographing, not art but as resource to inspire
- >>*ethnography*

me as a maker, a curious human being

- ▶ to develop an art/design practice inspired by the research, letting my being-in-the world shaped/guided by these ways of making.

2. re-looking: drawing, re-making:
looking closer, to understand the structures, to categorise and relate poetically (wiki), to reflect, imagine, dream (writing)

>>*Tim Ingold, speculative design, Tony Fry, Donna Haraway*

3. play-toolkit (resource 1):

photo cards, quotes, materials/objects

- ▶ to invent games, sculptural play
- ▶ to dream, imagine other uses/stories

>>*Helio Oiticica, Lygia Clarke, Franz Erhard Walter, Alejandro de Acosta, James Carse*

4. activities with other beings /making friends:

- ▶ workshops: hands-on, non-didactic, relating to others through the materials, starting something we cannot finish [e.g. with Chris Berthelsen, Brno, Fab Coop, Rancho Electronico, GPN Karlsruhe, Gartendeck St Pauli]
- ▶ performative lectures, collaborative movement/play
- >>*improvisation*
- ▶ interviews, writing
 - with makers, gardeners, artists, economics, hackers, design professionals, dancers, musicians, 'homeless', gatherers
 - growing rhizome network of ideas/discourse, relating with different lifeworlds, perspectives, values, relevance to different societies
- ▶ reflections on participatory/social design/collaboration, how people relate with materials and with each other

5. digital open resource (resource 2):

- ▶ blog of stories
- ▶ wiki of connecting threads/aspects/tactics, drawings (milieu et non-specialist techniques/joining methods, poetic conduits/navigation rather than systematic categories)
- ▶ small books of interviews, writing
- ▶ documentation of activities
- ▶ related projects

>>*Home-Made Russian/Europe (Archipov), Non Intentional Design (Brandes Erlhof), Tokyo DIY Gardening & Fixes (a-small-lab), Low Cost Design, Made in Tokyo (Atelier Bow Wow), Borrowed City (MotoElastico), A Pattern Language (C Alexander et al.)*

platform for sharing, offer kindling and footholds for others to make with growing, not finishing, suggesting

>>*open source, creative commons, hacker ethics, Deleuze on school and movements*

output/practice embodies the content of the research/theory
letting myself learn from and be guided by the making by non-specialists,
while experimenting with the platforms of sharing in art/design/self-organising contexts.

Lenses & Theoretical Threads:

Things simply are not 'fit for their purpose'. At one time a flake of flint was fit for the purpose of surgery, and stainless steel is not fit for the purpose yet. Everything we design and make is an improvisation, a lash-up, something inept and provisional. We live like castaways.

David Pye, The Nature and Aesthetics of Design. London: Barrie and Jenkins Ltd., 1978. p.14.

seeing/listening/tasting

I learnt through going to art school and museums, a certain quality of attention: taking time, paying attention to every single detail, relishing the minute nuances. Allan Kaprow wrote about aesthetic appreciation in washing one's hands in 'The Blurring of Art and Life'. Robert Smithson's Hotel Palenque lecture presented creative hallucinations from a derelict construction site. Japanese tea ceremonies, John Cage's 4'33", Pauline Olivero's 'Deep Listening' all offer ways of tuning into one's surroundings.

I wondered, if art is a way of seeing (Berger), then, what could I discover with this lens, outside the realms of art?

Inspired by projects such as Atelier BowWow's 'Made in Tokyo', Kyohei Sakaguchi 'Zero Yen Houses', Vladimir Archipov 'Home-Made Russia', MotoElastico 'Borrowed City', Bernard Rudofsky 'Architecture without Architects' >>Kon Wajiro, etc, I took a basic attitude of appreciating, discovering delight, taking a closer look in things outside: of slick things showcased in art/design publications, normally judged as 'informal' and brushed aside by professional design and architecture.

Perhaps this is akin to appreciating 'acquired tastes', whether it is smelly cheese, fermented fish, experimental theatre, or weird music. Straying from Western aesthetics, I have found affinity in the Japanese Wabi-sabi aesthetics and Zen philosophy, seeing beauty in the desolate and imperfection. e.g. poetry and delight of frugal 'lowly' materials. What is 'waste'? Another man's treasure.

A meditation master in Thailand once told me: 'Your mind is like a coconut shell. What you can perceive are only through the holes on the shell. So it is important to examine your mind's coconut shell and realise the limit of your perspective. Like an eye examining itself. This is not easy.' The Wabi-Sabi aesthetics came out of failed shoguns (?). Here I would like to give thanks to my position of being on the edge: of being a Chinese migrant to New Zealand, going to art school after studying science, travelling through Asia after living in New Zealand, hitchhiking, couchsurfing, volunteering for permaculture and conservation etc.

chance encounters

Discovering everyday resourcefulness involved a lot of rambling, wandering, getting lost, and being open to chance encounters. I have been a flaneur in many places, and not always intentionally so. One of the starting points was rural Cambodia, where I volunteered for a conservation center in 2013. On the side of the road I saw many home-made furniture, resembling the designs of Enzo Mari and Max Lamb, but born out of very different circumstances. That started my questioning of design in relation to the many realities on this earth.

Akin to the Situationist' *dérive*, I have been drifting through the city, counter to social conventions and everyday routes provided by urban design, open to coincidence and the unexpected. Seeing the creations as 'a game of communication', I read them as stories of living. I took photos to record the details of the construction. Over time I have found myself becoming attuned to certain things, being able to pick out the creations from my surroundings by feel, like a dog trained to detect certain scents. A gathering of materials, resources, stories have accumulated.

>>Situationists, psychogeography, atmosphere of a place, C. Alexander, Zumthor

Thus, this research does not attempt to be systematic or scientific, but open to the unexpected and ambiguous. It is important that I have had physical, bodily encounters with these things (rather than, for example, image searches), to have walked through the situations they inhabited. This is a difference between my position and the viewers. Through this

thesis I hope to express a nest and ecology of ideas that came out of these chance encounters.

agency

In 'Becoming Human through Design', Tony Fry describes how the Capitalist drive to privatise and control is producing a general sense of despair and helplessness, where people are only consumers. Consumers of what? Professional design.

In contrast, on the way to becoming professional designers, young people go through the art/design schools running on a premise like this: You can dream up any crazy idea and try to do it (at least the ones I have been fortunate to experience). *Jost Hochuli*, in 'Graphic Design as a School of Thought', says one should 'resist the tyranny of dogma'. Dexter Sinister wrote about developing towards a 'critical faculty'. *Kant* similarly advocates for 'the courage to think for oneself'.

Similarly, the examples of everyday resourcefulness often came out of a situation of not waiting for a 'professional' to come and fix the problem (due to monetary constraints or otherwise). Instead, the makers have asked themselves:

What can I do here, with the stuff around me?

How do I live (insert adjective) **right now, right here?**

-->see 'relating'

Max Stirner wrote that nothing belongs to you to start with, but to make something 'my own', one simply need to reach out one's hands. i.e. doing something.

Like the practice of computer hacking, through doing something with what is around, new know-how of materials emerge. What delights me is that instead of the homogeneity of the mainstream professional field and stern control of 'tidy' public spaces, there is a proliferation of divaricating, co-existing, highly individual ways of making.

There are always cracks, niches for new things to sprout.

caring

Consider the circumstances of these creations: things made by people who either own the place, or place of work where they have the freedom to change and customise, or have become owner through using (Stirner's 'my own') (Note on the more porous border between private and public in some cultures).

'To care about what one sees in the world leads to mobilizing one's creative powers.'

-Richard Sennett <*Conscience of the Eye*, 1992, p xiii>

Caring about what one sees leads to the desire to make something. I consider the people around these creations as user-hacker-maker-carer (borrowing Tony Watkin's 'user-builder'), emphasising the ongoing changes, modifications, fixes, transformations over time of both the people and things. A living relationship. This is in contrast to the traditional role distinctions and hierarchies between user and designer, where 'designing' finishes at the point of production.

'Take a spot and make it yours.'

Caring also carries a sense of gentleness: when one directly feels the consequence of a particular design decision, one would take care in making small adjustments instead of drastic changes.

by hand

'To touch is to be both open to unbound data and guide with conscious intent.'

Here, Richard Sennett articulates the reciprocity of touching and making by hand: one is simultaneously touching and touched at the same time, with another thing. When I touch something with my hands, I feel the tactile, sensuous texture of it, and it feels me too. Through the simple action of picking up, playing with (*Caruso St John, Peter and Alison Smith*), a process

of corresponding (*Ingold*) is initiated. Going somewhere we don't yet know. (see also: relating)

Jared Diamond wrote about 'tinkering' being the origin of new inventions, rather than necessity. He described how the Papua New Guineans played with new materials like a coke bottle, learning its material properties, then devising ways of using it. Ideas generated from the process of making/playing. A similar process could be seen in experimental musicians tinkering with instruments (modifying existing or DIY creations), seeing what other sounds could be made, by straying from traditional ways of playing (e.g. Douglas Lilburn's experiments with electronic music in New Zealand). Perhaps it is not necessary to argue who is the mother of inventions (necessity or tinkering). From my own experiences (e.g. Zero Yen Tour, bookbinding on the train), I have found that being in a situation of desperation, need or 'impoverishment' have often provided the impetus to tinker, to try out surprising material combinations; albeit a similar playing process also occur in the studio, though much safer.

'There is no such thing as knowledge—what would it be? There is only know-how. In other words, there are crafts and trades. Despite all claims to the contrary, crafts hold the key to all knowledge.'
— Bruno Latour

Over time, a tacit knowledge emerges, a kind of know-how, craft, material and local intuition. >>*Ingold, Sennett*

When I have had the chance to meet the makers behind the creations, I have been surprised by their practical knowledge and intimate relation with the materials and resources of the local environment, and their innate ability to improvise with the things at hand. It was as though they did not need to think, their tools/materials became natural extension of their bodies. Embodied knowledge over repetition and time, a form of practice.

Some stories: Thai mountain carpenter wandering the forest like a hardware store, blind busker on Queen St knowing the people through listening, streetsleeper of Tokyo giving us tips on how to survive a snowstorm, Phnom Penh tyre guy using his feet as vice for rubber tyre-

making, rural Cambodian carrying watermelon on the back of a bike using sticks and some string.

remedies, recipes, tactics, hacks, fixes

Making by hand means getting one's hands dirty, learning by doing, or more importantly, failing, trial and error. Coping with and learning from complexity and mess (*Richard Sennett <Conscience of the Eye, 1992, p xiii>*).

In most of the examples, the form of labour that created the things were not the result of alienation—instead of being told what to do, to an exterior standard. People made, played, failed, tried again, evolving small modifications. The process is not efficient (compared to paying a 'professional' to fix the problem), it is prone to errors and ongoing repair. But it also offers a 'more expansive qualities of time and attention' (Solnit): joy, mess, pleasures, frustration, surprises, satisfaction... A learning experience.>>*Fry, Illich*
e.g. childhood swing

Unlike professional services or products, these unassuming, sometimes inconspicuous things tell other stories: not simply artefacts of monetary value, but carrying traces of human activities/stories/situations (maxigas), accumulating signs of use, and being human(e). A form of communication: love, desperation, specific, peculiar, care, personal, humble, honest.
>>*Bow Wow, MotoElastico, Archipov, Community Museum Project*

the earth is a form of writing, a geography of which we had forgotten that we ourselves are the co-authors.
— Georges Perec, 'co-' added by xin

multitudes, diversity

'Design must embrace misunderstandings, mistakes and so-called misuse by people as a source of innovation and a means of improving cultural diversity.'
— First Declaration of the St Moritz Design Summit, in Uta Brandes and Michael Erlhoff, *Non Intentional Design, 2006 ralf daab, köln*

A Swedish IT professor, upon seeing the cards of everyday resourcefulness that I showed him, told me about how, through lifting the norm/standard of a community, like the taboos of 'failure' or 'weird', individual creativity are then allowed to flourish in a socially supportive environment. I have experienced such sense of diversity at the Chaos Communication Congress. 'One cannot fail in a hackerspace' (maxigas). 'Failure is not necessarily bad' (Potrc).

Once I let go of the lens of a singular, dominant judgement/taste system, suddenly things are not fixed, 'waste' is also 'treasure', 'deviant' and 'norm' are relative.

The research gathered here is an assemblage (Lerup) of independent lifeworlds, of many possibilities to a similar problem, co-existing micro-cosmoses (John Wood), imperfect multiverses, proliferating suggestions for ways of being, of heterotopia (Foucault) and polis (Arendt). The German word *vielfalt* offers an interesting imagery here: by having many folds, many wrinkles, there are multiple niches for diverse lifeworlds to co-exist.

'...unbounded richness of variations still exist'
White Fungus

I relish that, no matter how impervious a system might seem, there are always cracks, interstices, room to manoeuvre, porous spaces. Rather than aiming for 'closure', one could focus on allowing space to improvise and play, for multiple flourishing.

'...plants come out to chew at the sides...'

This offers a stray away from the singular/dominant (stories, standards, norms / rulers for judging, striving for 'perfection', globalizing cultures, division between formal/informal, specialists/dilettantes etc.).

>>hacking, open source community, decentralisation
>>biodiversity vs monoculture

Instead of saying 'my idea is better than yours', I say, here are many ideas, how about having them exist together? Like an ecosystem?

The Borrowed City we experience our everyday life is [sic] a romantic ecosystem, full of identity and creativity...
-MotoElastico

>>Ecology: Bow Wow
>>Serving Library pamphlets, Deleuze the professor, Rancière/Jacotot Universal Teaching, equality
>>Illich: experts

How would this be if an industrial designer was to tackle this 'design problem'?

Take the example of the hanging bottles of water used to stabilise flapping tarpaulin signs in front of shops in Taiwan. One could imagine, that a 'designer' would have designed something more 'durable', perhaps with steel wire attached firmly to a nearby structure. The methodology of industrial design seems to assume the usage of standardised, industrially available materials for a lasting solution, which plugs into a chain of extractive industries, factory labour, commercial distribution etc. While eco-design trends tries to bring back the 'local making' approach, the fact that there is still a 'designer' who designs at a remove from the situation of its use, means it could not be entirely local.

'A very important thing is not to make up your mind that you are any one thing.'
Gertrude Stein

Multitudes could also be multiple uses of a single thing. Brandes et al. observed that while people repurpose existing structures for their own uses, there are few objects in public spaces intentionally designed to be open to multiple uses.

A friend one said, 'broken tools are better'. Instead of using them a pre-determined way, when it is broken, the ways of relating with the object opens up: imagination is allowed to play. Beyond the initial confusion, there is something to liberating about relating with ambiguous forms. Examples: *Cuban objects, Home-Made Russia, and Prisoners Inventions.*

Here the idea of the play/toolkit grew: a loose kit of 'stuff' (ambiguous, between artefact and material (Ingold)), offering possibility for the making of new things according to the particular whims of the players.

imagining

(dreaming, speculating, hallucinating)

Imagining is closely coupled with seeing. Like Smithson's 'Hotel Palenque' hallucinations, I have wandered in many strange lands, not knowing the local grammar of material/spatial cultures, and imagined things peculiar to an outsider's lens.

At a junk-remaking workshop with a school in rural New Zealand, Chris Berthelsen started by picking up something, and asking the children,

'What could this be?'

(Contrast with the usual school question of 'What is this?')

While Brandes et al., wrote of our ability to recognise potential uses in designed objects, I think that ability can be applied to any thing. That was the start of making, when the early human picked up a stone and used it as a tool (Tony Fry).

One thing could be many. That are the situations that allow potentials to flourish?

The practical components of my project: the playkit, open-ended workshops and performative lectures are way to inspire this imagination in others.

beyond the present imagination >> *magic of Eisenstein, Fry powers of imagination*
'the possibilities of improvising with what exists in my life'- Trungpa

relating with (by hand 🤝🤝)

we make the world, the world makes us

Tony Fry articulates the process of design and making as a way of becoming: humans relating with the materials and beings in the surrounds, and becoming something else together. I feel this, as I became more attuned to sniffing out such resourcefulness over the years.

Building is a special way of suggesting.

Rather than fixed rules, there is a certain elasticity and flexibility in relating enmeshing, corresponding (Ingold), collaborative co-existence (Anna Tsing), co-making, symposies (Harraway).

*...staying alive—for every species— requires livable collaborations.
Collaboration means working across difference, which leads to contamination.
Anna Tsing*

A reciprocity develops in this elastic relating. One small change leads to another, and the maker is changed through the process. Slowly new rules/goals/games evolve, through play. >> *infinite game, Acosta*

The Chinese idiom 急中生智, describes a wisdom that grew out of being pushed by limitations of the situation. A certain learning by doing and discoveries through trial and error (tinkering of J Diamond), playing and chance encounters.

Christopher Dell observed that 'improvisation' in daily life is often conceived as born out of impoverishment, a kind of last resort when things didn't go according to plan. He encourage us to think of improvising as technology, something we use intentionally, a skill that we develop, to cope with a constantly shifting world.

Perhaps surfing and the practice of contact improvisation are good analogies here: while one cannot predict or plan how the wave/the dance partner would move at any one time, but one could develop the skills (awareness, listening, being present, intuition, embodied know-how) to relate with the moment. Let us not forget that we all improvise all the time,

Relating in all directions, back and forth, fluid

It may involve: gradual stiffening (C Alexander), piecemeal growth, trial & error.

It may have a paper vision/blueprint at the start, but is also open to an evolving design that changes through each step of making, an itinerary process >>transformation design

Instead of aiming for 'closure' or 'finished product or 'final solution', >>maxigas one plays a different game of keeping the play going, of redirective practices, of constant transformation from one thing to the other >>J Carse, Aikido, Fry.

Nikki Harre wrote of three types of things: durable, temporary and junk.

...objects that are durable (and repairable) are better than junk. But we should perhaps give more thought to the value of temporary objects. These – like junk – are not designed to last, but – unlike junk – can be gracefully retired once they break or we are tired of them. They ease back into Earth and allow people to keep creating, rather than be tied to the objects that already exist.

We all know the pleasure of making things and making temporary things is an excellent, low-impact way to pass the time. Imagine a world full of such things – it would have so much more creative possibility and beauty than the world we live in now.

Many of the makeshift creations involve turning 'junk' into 'temporary objects', by discovering new pleasures from 'useless' things. The distinction between 'durable' and 'temporary' objects is a matter of scale.

The Japanese textile, Boro (ぼろ), could be an example of this. These are textiles that have been mended or patched together, where new bedsheets are made from old kimonos, threadbare scraps twisted into ropes and woven into new things. The Scandinavian rag rug tradition is also related. Leaving the various status 'judgements' aside ('To working class Japanese, these boro garments were an embarrassing reminder of their former poverty, and little effort was expended by government or cultural institutions at the time to preserve such artifacts.' -wikipedia, contrast with the perception of Kintsugi as an art form: money and artistic training dictates value), these objects and transformations mimic the way materials cycle in the natural world, and do

return to the natural world through composting (the natural materials take a detour in the human world). They are 'cradle-to-cradle designs' before such terms were coined.

Related is the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, an embracing of the flawed or imperfect.

“Not only is there no attempt to hide the damage, but the repair is literally illuminated... a kind of physical expression of the spirit of mushin....Mushin is often literally translated as "no mind," but carries connotations of fully existing within the moment, of non-attachment, of equanimity amid changing conditions. ...The vicissitudes of existence over time, to which all humans are susceptible, could not be clearer than in the breaks, the knocks, and the shattering to which ceramic ware too is subject. This poignancy or aesthetic of existence has been known in Japan as mono no aware, a compassionate sensitivity, or perhaps identification with, [things] outside oneself.”
—Christy Bartlett, *Flickwerk: The Aesthetics of Mended Japanese Ceramics*

While this quote refers to the tradition of golden joinery/Kintsugi, where repaired ceramics are (artistic and financially) valued more than the unrepaired ones, it is also possible to apply this to everyday resourcefulness made out of junk.

<diagram of flow and transformations>

Permanence is an illusion.

'things are only as they are because they are maintained to be so'
-Rancho Electronico workshop realisation

Even the 'durable' things, like a building, only stays as it is because people maintains it to be so, as any house-owner could confirm.

In Taipei, the owner of a handmade breakfast corner told me of how their collapsible house extensions have been typhoon-proof over the last twenty years: we just pack everything down before typhoon comes.

'temporary construction is a permanent phenomenon' -Park Tsai

<mess> story of MIT lab building of many changes like a gallery, creativity to flourish when it is not tidy.

open source / hacking culture of diversity and experimentation: a loosekit for a way of living, together

...whatever we own will be returned. The matter we are made of was once cooked inside a star and will refuel new organisms. And our possessions will be eventually shared among our family members.

Owning is an illusion, borrowing is a necessity, and our cities are the right place to do it.

-MotoElastico

Dubravka Sekulic, in a talk on 'Coding the Urban Commons' <http://www.eurozine.com/legal-hacking-and-space/>, used the example of Richard Stallman to show how one man's vision of open source coding could have agency in the face of prevailing privatization and protection of 'intellectual property' by corporation forces such as Microsoft, when it is shared widely between like-minded people, and grows. >>Lessig, Stallman, p2p

These creations 'stimulate us to reconsider the meaning of sharing in a contemporary society' (MotoElastico). Along with my experiences of solidary societies, hackerspaces, anarchist camps, experimental music scenes and artist-run spaces, they have given me hope that 'another world is possible'.

'borrowing from a neighboring group is very similar to inventing since it calls for recombining already existing elements and creating new associations of technical elements.' >>Gourham

Everyone already is a designer, and the role of the professional designer/artist could be to encourage human beings' innate ability to create, to foster a culture/ecology of flourishing diversity.

Some tools/summary:
breaking down hierarchies, other ways of appreciating, beyond 'looks'

modifying, customising, adapting, recombining/modular:

respond to specific situations

non-specialised techniques

'Specialists are thus merely narrow-minded amateurs, the all-rounders are the living dilenttantes - and the future belongs to them.'
- Michael Erlhoff

Not-ethics:

I'd like to note that these way of making: makeshift, resourcefulness, are merely tools. They carry no inherent ethics. Like a knife that can be used to prepare nourishing food, or to harm a life, how these are applied are dependent on the maker and the particular context.

I have seen harrowing examples in Cambodia: e.g. during Khmer Rouge S22 door lock, sugar palm barbs for throat slitting, NID crime examples, disobedient objects.

Likewise, self-organisation is not ethics. Here we can borrow from the hacker code of ethics: instead of enslavement to external rules/standards/traditions, one need to work out, negotiation with particular individuals involved, their own practices and principles to follow (Stirner, Landstreicher).