Harmony and connection

– Human connectedness through social design

Eusun Pak

A Document Submitted to:

The Department of Design and Architecture, Iceland Academy of the Arts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design, 2016

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Mentor MA Project: Thesis Supervisor: Guðbjörg R Jóhannesdóttir
Mentor MA Project: Thesis Advisor: Nanna Hlín Halldórsdóttir
Mentor MA Project: Design Work: Massimo Santanicchia

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to find a way for social design to encourage people to rethink solidarity and human connectedness. Individualism is rapidly causing social problems, in a broad sense of political, economic, and social aspects. Specifically, my research focused on a loss of human connectedness. I think we have to shed new light on the meaning of human connectedness, in this day and age. People are losing the meaning of connectedness and this is causing social problems such as social isolation, lack of social skills, and apathy.

With regard to this, I would like to reflect upon the meaning of living together through the concept of nature. When we experience nature, sometimes we feel that we exist as a part of it. A great example of this is looking at nature from a great distance. The important thing is that this way of seeing nature leads people to think about harmony and connection, as they become aware of their own smallness in the wider picture.

From a design perspective, this research will show that it is possible to re-create connection through social design, by influencing perception through nature, as an alternative to a state of disconnection.

Keywords: Social design, individualism, human connectedness, nature.

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1. Introduction

Modern people are living in a rapidly changing world in terms of society, economy, and technology. Rapid change gives various positive aspects to the changing physiognomy of modern society. However, on the flip side of the numerous changes and developments are many adverse effects that should not be overlooked.

Individualism is one of the serious problems we face today. It is not only negatively affecting a particular individual, but also various fields of society, politics, and economy. Emphasis on individualism does not need to be solely negative; personal or solitary time is significant for the development of each and every human being. For example, having time to speculate on one's life often leads people to enhance their life. But individualism has become a large problem because it is corrupted by capitalistic and consumeristic vice.

As capitalism degenerates into consumerism, life, for people, has become more competitive. That is one of the reasons why hyper-individualism emerged. The Wiktionary definition for hyper-individualism is "A tendency for people to act in a highly individual way, without regard to society".[1] More and more people have become increasingly individualistic, consumer-oriented, and more self-focused. This leads to increased egotism and selfishness, as well as a sense of relative deprivation, defeat, and social alienation. Erich Fromm, who was a social psychologist, said in his book *To have or to be*, that societies in which egotism, selfishness, and greed did not exist were supposed to be "primitive," their inhabitants "childlike."[2] On the other hand, in contemporary societies, people are getting more and more selfish and many of them are very obsessed by their possessions.

In addition, as a result of fewer marriages, more divorce, and longer life expectancy, the number of single-person households is on the increase. In Germany today around forty million people live alone, or almost half the population.[3] These kinds of social changes have already occurred in many countries. So, are we steadily losing a sense of solidarity in any given society? And, is it then really a problem for our social life? I assume many people believe that they don't need to compromise and cooperate with others. The problem is that individualistic thinking can result in disconnection from others as well as making people apathetic to each other. There are many efforts and movements for increasing connectedness and solidarity in various fields such as social policy, social movement, and social design. To be specific, design activism, social dining, and local community activation are good examples of efforts to reinforce relationships with each other in an individualistic society.

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[1] "Hyperindividualism," *wiktionary,* accessed November 7, 2015, https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/hyperindividualism.

[2] Erich Fromm, *To have or to be?*. (New York: Continuum, 2008), 6.

[3] Nico Keilman, Biodiversity: The threat of small households. (*Nature*,421, 2003), 489-490.

From this point of view, the aim of my research is to use social design to encourage people to rethink solidarity and connectedness. Connectedness is defined by the measure of how people come together and contact with others in a society.[4] In other words, it means relationships with other people and engagement in a social community. Making contact with others is essential and fundamental human need as well as it makes our lives valuable. Therefore, I believe that the importance of human connectedness cannot be emphasized enough.

My motivation in this research stems from personal experience. When I lived in South Korea I experienced various kinds of social problems, caused by highly competitive and individualistic Korean society. From this background I was able to reflect, from a distance, on the negative influence of individualism, and on the resulting loss of human connectedness.

As a result, my research aim is to approach this issue by applying design which shows how new solidarities between people can be built through social design. So, in this thesis, I give an overview of social design, and of theoretical aspects of individualism in the context of human connectedness. Also, I would like to reflect upon the meaning of living together, through the concept of nature, by employing and taking into account the perspective as described by the Overview effect: When we – human beings – are overwhelmed by tons of stars in the night sky, or experiencing the landscape we can feel that we exist as a part of nature. If we try looking at human connection from this same point of view, – from our place in the natural scheme of things –, we realize that we all live together, whether we realize it from day to day or not.

2. Context

2.1. Design and Society

Design today is applied in many different ways, from products design, to social design, and to experience design. Ideas of design, and what constitutes design, have changed over time. The traditional conception of design is focused on function and aesthetics. In the early twentieth century, the traditional design model was constructed in Europe with reference to the industrial production of the time. It resulted in a conception of design as a specialized activity of professional designers, aimed towards the design of products for mass production using the industrialized technology of the period. As time has passed, the initial model of design has

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[4] "Social connectedness," *Wikipedia the free encyclopedia*, accessed January 27, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_connectedness.

gradually been redefined and changed, with successive additions, which have generated form the need to widen its field of application from products to services and to organizations.[5] The term 'designer' was first used in The United States. At the time the term did not refer to an industrial designer who designs machines or mechanical parts, workshops or other specialized buildings. Those were then the domain of design engineers. Said design engineers had the role to design only in the sense that it means to give something form to be appropriate and possible with respect to its intended function. In which case, there was no importance given to the aesthetic side, which, on the other hand, is implicit in what we now term design.[6]

The fields of design have expanded and the variety has multiplied. Most importantly, in the context of this paper, designers have focused their attention more and more towards social issues in the last decade. Consequently, the scope of agendas in design has widened beyond the earlier typical products and services to include social needs and citizens' concerns.[7]

2.2. Social design

"There is something going on in design – something powerful. People have realized a simple truth: design is a legitimate way to change the world " – Eve Blossom [8]

The ultimate goal of social design is a search for ways to lead and create a better society. Today's society has changed dramatically, and this change has been, and is, accompanied by various social issues and problems. For this reason, contemporary designers cope with social problems by reacting with their design skills:

> Design is about finding solutions, practical innovations, and making improvements that enhance people's lives, address problems or open up possibilities for a better life. When you think about design like this, 'social design' is about applying general design principles to our social realities and 'designing' ways to address social issues (such as poverty or social isolation), and ultimately creating a more just and sustainable society.[9]

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[5] Ezio Manzini and Rachel Coad, *Design, when everybody designs: An introduction to design for social innovation.* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 53.

[6] Bruno Munari and Patrick Creagh, *Design as art* (London: Penguin, 2008), 29.

[7] Michiel Schwarz, and Diana Krabbendam, *Sustainist Design Guide* (Amsterdam: BIS Publishers, 2013), 12.

[8] Ibid. 10.

[9] "So what is social design? asks Ingrid Burkett," *Design4socialinnovation,* September12, 2014, accessed November 2, 2015, http://design4socialinnovation.com.au/so-what-is-social-design/.

The original meaning of the term social design is: a design activity that deals with problems that are not dealt with by the market or state, and in which the people involved do not usually have a voice. From this emerges the noble ethical nature of social design.[10] In contemporary society, social design has arisen wherever designers are applying their skills and methods to improve social change. The social good is becoming a key aim for design and designers in many areas of society. The rise of social design implies a shift in the role that designers are playing in society. As social needs and values are increasingly brought into design focus, the design agenda is taking on a more explicit ethical dimension.[11]

In addition, social design can be categorized as social innovation and design activism. Social innovation can create transformational change in under-served, underrepresented, and disadvantaged communities worldwide. Design for social innovation is not a new design discipline. It is the application of what, today, design as a whole should be. It follows that all design skills and capabilities are used and blended, in different ways case by case, to promote and support social innovation. We can also observe that strategic and service design components are included in all these cases.[12] 'IDEO' is a representative example of social innovation by design. They are a global design company. And they use design thinking to address social and global issues like poverty, health, water and sanitation, economic empowerment, access to financial services, and gender equity. They design products, services, and entire systems of solutions. They routinely partner up with local leaders to ensure that all concepts and solutions are practical, culturally appropriate, scalable, and sustainable.[13]

Figure 1. IDEO Social design

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[10] Ezio Manzini and Rachel Coad, *Design, when everybody designs: An introduction to design for social innovation,* 53.

[11] Michiel Schwarz and Diana Krabbendam, *Sustainist Design Guide* (Amsterdam: BIS Publishers, 2013), 12.

[12] Ezio Manzini and Rachel Coad, *Design, when everybody designs: An introduction to design for social innovation,* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 64.

[13] "Social innovation," *IDEO*, accessed December 14, 2015, https://www.ideo.com/expertise/social-innovation/.

Design activism is defined as representing design's important role in encouraging and instigating social change, and arousing awareness about contemporary social values and beliefs. To be specific, design activism mainly focuses on problems within the status quo such as in relation to social exclusion, inequality, climate change, sustainability, etc., or by questioning the constraints which mass production and consumerism put on people's everyday life.

In this regard, design activism is not limited to a single discipline of design but involves various design areas like product design, visual design, interaction design, urban design, architecture, and fashion design, among others.[14] In this way, social innovation and design activism share same aims and values. Social connection and problem solving is one of the key concept of social design. In light of this conception of social design, I would like to explain Scott Burnham's work as a prime example. He is an urban strategist who has collaborated with designers and artists on various projects. 'Urban Play' is one of his projects.

Figure 2. Scott Burnham's and Stefan Sagmeister, *Urban Play*, 2008, Amsterdam.

The project was created for the city of Amsterdam in collaboration with Droog Design, and explores open approaches to design and creativity in the city. In the project, graphic designer Stefan Sagmeister, created a street collage using 250,000 Euro cent coins, which stretched across a street in a swirl that spelt out the phrase 'Obsessions make my life worse and my work better'. Both Sagmeister and Burnham had purposefully left the collage open to the public so that they could interact with it as they wanted; if they lost some coins to the public, they concluded, so be it.

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[14] Thomas Markussen, "The disruptive aesthetics of design activism: enacting design between art and politics," *Design Issues* 29, no.1, (2013) : 38-50.

Figure 3. Scott Burnham's and Stefan Sagmeister, *Urban Play*, 2008, Amsterdam.

This project was completed by a hundred and fifty volunteers during eight days at a public place. The lettering, which is made solely of coins, was laid out on a 20 x 42 meter square in Amsterdam. People enjoyed the creative work as participants or passers-by. The process demonstrates the role of social design and designers within such a project. Also, by looking at the design, we can make assumptions about how designer can provide a framework and thus contribute to society in collaboration with the public by applying the terms of social design. It means that social design leads people to participate in design or art work with the aim of communally creating benefit in society. Many people can take part in this kind of design work, regardless of age, gender, and background. This feature of social design can promote awareness of social problems by functioning as a communication tool.

3. Theories on individualism and connectedness

3.1. Individualism and social problems

Should one want to inquire after the general definition of individualism the Merriam Webster dictionary's definition of individualism is the following: "The belief that the needs of each person are more important than the needs of the whole society or group". Also, it means "the actions or attitudes of a person who does things without being concerned about what other

people will think"[15] The term individualism, and similar terminology in all languages like socialism or other isms, dates from the 19th century. Individualism once represented interesting national variations, but its variety of meanings have since become widely mixed up.[16]

In order to examine the different sides of individualism it is important to note the different conceptions and definitions of individualism between the West and the East. The difference is due to readings which are affected by history and politics. Generally, Eastern scholars, and seemingly the general public, think more of selfishness or egotism when they think of individualism. At the same time, the West has a more positive conception of individualism without maybe really acknowledging that it does so.

I argue that perverse effects of 21st century capitalism result in hyper-individualism resulting in various kinds of social problems. Capitalism has led to a consumeristic society, as well as to a state of hyper-competition.[17]

Hyper-individualism can be defined as taking to the extreme the celebration of the hard won accomplishment, and placing high value on the freedom of the individual. A focus on the 'atomic' self, minimally connected to community or society, results in a decrease of sense of connectedness and solidarity, and loss of awe with regard to one's life, and towards humans' natural environment.

There is also significant lack of moral imagination and empathy regarding the plight of our many fellow creatures, and a disregard for our complicity in creating and sustaining systems which ignore and aggravate the plight of the less fortunate.[18]

Likewise, hyper-individualism is rapidly causing social problems in the broad sense of political, economic, and social aspects of everyday life, such as the fact that more single people are living alone as well as dying alone. The rising number of single-person households may result in social problems such as the lack of social skills, the dissolving of family structures, and in social isolation.

We can find some tragic articles about social issues very easily today; they abound all over the internet and social media for example. The important fact is that these social issues are happening more and more often, seemingly, all over the world. And there is data to corroborate this feeling:

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[15] "Individualism," *Merriam Webster dictionary*, accessed December 19, 2015, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/individualism.

[16] "Individualism," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v.,* accessed November 9, 2015, http://www.britannica.com/topic/individualism.

[17] Candace Smith, "Neoliberalism and Individualism," *The Society Pages*, December 4, 2012, accessed November 17, 2015, http://thesocietypages.org/sociologylens/2012/12/04/neoliberalism-and-individualism-ego-leads-to-interpersonal-violence/.

[18] John Coggon and Swati Gola, *Global health and international community: ethical, political and regulatory challenges* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 67.

For example, South Korea where suicide has become the fourth main cause of death, with up to forty people commits suicide every day. South Korea has had the highest suicide rates in the industrialized world for the last eight years and now suicide is the number one cause of death for people between the ages of 10 and 30. Children and young adults will cite the stress of living in a hyper-competitive society, or the pressure of high expectations for exam results or college entrance testing, as the main reason for contemplating taking their own lives. Middle-aged South Koreans most often turn to suicide through concerns over personal economic and financial problems, and the elderly commit suicide because of isolation due to the breakdown of the traditional family unit.[19] The British author, George Monbiot, said that competition and individualism are forcing us into a devastating Age of Loneliness.[20]

Kodokushi (孤獨死), a Japanese term, which means 'lonely death' describes how people die alone but the death remains undiscovered for a long period of time. It is not only a problem in Japan. It is a global issue. South Korea has the same problem, and the rate of 'lonely death' is increasing faster than ever before. When other parts of the globe are examined, e.g. around 50,000 people die in New York each year, some alone and undiscovered for long periods of time.[21]

Furthermore, a stark example of this contemporary condition is found in examples such as the story of a homeless woman found dead in a McDonald's branch in Hong Kong. She had lain there for seven hours while customers continued to eat their meals around her.[22] This story suggests how apathetic we have become, in modern society. By examining stories like this, we can infer that a growing number of people feel alienated and lonely, in contemporary society the world over. These kinds of social problems are caused by many reasons both individual and societal. Of course, various efforts are under way to improve the social problems in many countries. Social design is one of them.

In my point of view, our personal attitude to individualism is a significant factor. This is because society is composed of individuals from a broad view. And, social design serves as an important role towards solution. Therefore, I would like to approach this issue by applying design to the question of how new solidarities between people can be built through social design.

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[19] Lucy Williamson, "South Korea: Suicide Nation," *BBC*, November 8, 2011, accessed November 7, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-15331921

[20] George Monbiot, "Falling apart," *Guardian,* October 15, 2014, accessed November 9, 2015, http://www.monbiot.com/2014/10/14/falling-apart/.

[21] Nathan R. Kleinfield, "The lonely death of Geroge Bell," *NewYorkTimes*, October 17,2015, accessed November 11, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/18/nyregion/dying-alone-in-new-york-city.html.

[22] Gloria Chan, "Homeless woman found dead at Hong Kong McDonald," *South China Morning Post*, October 13, 2015, accessed November 4, 2015, http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1863953/homeless-woman-found-dead-hong-kong-mcdonalds-24-hours-after-she-sat?page=all.

3.2. Human connectedness

The world seems less solid than it used to be. It has lost its apparent unity and continuity from when various aspects of life could be tied together into a meaningful whole, and the happenings of today could be traced back to their roots or cause and forward to its consequences.[23]

As discussed above, capitalism results in negative effects of individualism such as selfishness, egotism, and a sense of deprivation. Moreover, economic strength is a dominant factor of the social hierarchies found in capitalist societies. Erich Fromm, who was a German social psychologist, in his book *To have or to be*, believed that eighteenth-century capitalism underwent quite radical changes in which economic behavior became separated from ethics and human values.[24] Which begs the question: What is the value of life in this era?

Unfortunately, selfishness is assumed to be a reasonable behavior these days, and preferred over altruism. Many people are habitually looking, more or less, only after their own interests. For example, they tend to consider, first and foremost, themselves and their family. Also, people are reluctant to care about others, neighborhood, politics, etc. In this way consumerism has a strong influence on selfishness and greed. People tend to obsess over riches and money in consumeristic societies. They consider personal gain a high priority, and it causes greed that lead to self–centered individualism.

George Monbiot, a British journalist and author of the book 'The Age of Consent: A Manifesto for a New World Order', believes that more than a fifth of British children say they "just want to be rich". They prefer more high-salaried jobs rather than working as e.g. train conductors or nurses. In addition, wealth and fame are the sole ambitions of 40% of those surveyed.[25] South Korean teenagers have the same kind of perspective on their life. Most of them consider money the absolute precondition for happiness.[26] As a result people generally think about money as a prerequisite of happiness. Even children and teenagers think this, but not only the youngsters, also their elders regard personal gain and money highly.

According to the Easterlin paradox propounded by U.S. economist Rechard Easterlin, though people with higher incomes are more likely to report being happy, rising incomes do not

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[23] Zygmunt Bauman, *Alone again: Ethics after certainty*. (No. 9. Demos, 1994.), 13.

[24] Erich Fromm, *To have or to be?* (London: Continuum, 2008.), 6.

[25] George Monbiot, "Falling apart," *Guardian*, October 15, 2014, accessed November 9, 2015, http://www.monbiot.com/2014/10/14/falling-apart/.

[26] EBS Docuprime, "Capitalism," *YouTube video,* 1:00:24, October, 2012, accessed November 10, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HC25gcxdTbQ&list=PLA7-otOEKcl3L93reO36ATGct620jwt2Y&index=2.

necessarily lead to increased happiness.[27] In other words, once basic needs are fulfilled, happiness does not increase much, even if income rises substantially.

In accordance with this, perhaps happiness comes from other directions, such as in forming solid relationships with others, having a sense of meaning in one's life, and from being thankful for everyday life.

With the above in mind, I would like to apply social psychological theory to social design. Erich Fromm explained that "we are a society of notoriously unhappy people: lonely, anxious, depressed, destructive, dependent-people who are glad when we have killed the time we are trying so hard to save." [28] According to Fromm, there are two dominant ways of being human; a "being" mode and a "having" mode. He contends that being mode not only makes us avoids strife but also creates one of the deepest forms of human happiness: shared enjoyment. The experience of sharing makes and keeps the relation between two individuals alive.[29] On the other hand, the having mode makes us very focused on material gains, and while in it people tend to judge each other by looking at what they have. Therefore, the being mode offers a good alternative to what has become a problematic society:

> In the being mode, private having (private property) has little affective importance, because I do not need to own something in order to enjoy it, or even in order to use it. In the being mode, more than one person-in fact millions of people- can share in the enjoyment of the same object, since none need-or want-to have it, as a condition of enjoying it. This not only avoids strife; it creates one of the deepest forms of human happiness: shared enjoyment. [30]

If we perceive ourselves as human beings within the concept of being mode, we can understand that we do not exist alone but are living together. Therefore, human connection is one of the essential behaviors as is emotion.

Brené Brown, an American scholar, author, and research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work, says in her TED talk, said that connection is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. Also, it doesn't matter whether you talk to people who work in social justice, mental health, abuse or neglect, what we know is that connection. The ability to feel connected is neurobiologically how we are wired.

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[27] Easterlin, R. A., *Does economic growth improve the human lot? Some empirical evidence. Nations and households in economic growth,* (University of Pennsylvania,1974). *89*, 89-125.
[28] Fromm, Erich. *To have or to be?* (London: Continuum, 2008), 5.
[29] Ibid, 93.
[30] Ibid, 93.

Also, it means why we exist.[31] Moreover, she claims that "connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard and valued-when they can give and receive without judgment."

In other words, having a connection with others is valuable in human life, both personally and socially. This is due to the fact that when we meet and have relationships with others, our identity can be proven and clarified. It is hard to discern one's own identity relying simply on one's own view, or on guesses alone. A person's relationships and interactions with others are key factors for forming identity. Zygmund Baumann, a Polish sociologist, said, "Identity must be seen as such; the dividing line between a socially accepted and an individually imagined identity is one between self-assertion and madness. This is why we all feel time and again an overwhelming 'need of belonging'– a need to identify ourselves not just as individual human beings, but as members of a larger entity." [32]

3.3. Perception of Landscape

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better. – Albert Einstein

People have different points of view and, different ways of thinking. These things lead to each one's behavior or attitude about their own life. Also, sometimes it shows new side and gives a chance to reevaluate what we've already known.

I would like to apply perception of nature as an alternative to re-establish connections between people, and inspiration of design project.

Perception is our phrasing of the relationship between the outside and the inside; inner-and outer space. It demands a substantial leap of imagination to change our specific personal construction, because to accomplish change we need to see things from a new and different angle. But when a new way of perceiving is signified through creative action, it can, it turn, be experienced by others. At which point their perceptions can also change.[33] In this regards, how we see and feel nature gives us a fresh way of thinking.

The problem is due to the fact that people have their own view of nature and it differs based on their various perspectives and previous experience. Some people recognize nature as an important part of human life, and some people do not think about it at all. I would like to offer

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[31] Brené Brown, "The power of vulnerability," *TED video,* June, 2010, accessed November 16, 2015, http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability
[32] Zygmunt Bauman, *Alone again: Ethics after certainty* (No. 9. Demos, 1994), 23.
[33] Alan Fletcher, *The art of looking sideways* (London: Phaidon Press, 2001), 197.

a conception of nature, which implies human co-existence and connection. For instance, we are infinitely small within the scheme of nature and, from a perspective that gives a view from a distance, we are obviously living together.

This concept can be seen as an alternative to the loss of human connection currently evident, as well as the egoistic, greedy way of thinking contemporary humans have become accustomed to, in the way previously stated. In this chapter, I explain what is meant by this kind of perception of nature and what can we learn from the concept by introducing, in more depth, two specific examples; View of nature, from East Asian traditional landscape painting, and the Overview effect.

3.3.1. View of nature

There are various views on how we perceive and feel nature. When we experience nature, sometimes we feel that we exist as a part of it. A great example of this is looking at nature from a distance. The important thing is that this way of seeing nature tends to lead people to think in terms of coexistence and harmony. As an example to demonstrate this, I will refer to traditional East Asian landscape painting and its implicit sense of awe, in order to explain the relationship between this kind of perception of nature, and perception of human connection.

Traditional East Asian landscape painting shows two important aspects; 'a portrayal of nature itself ' and 'a codified illustration of the human perspective of nature and the world.' The painting represents a strong viewpoint of awe-inspiring landscape. Thus, the human figure is depicted in diminutive form, or not present at all.[34] This perspective means their view of nature is not anthropocentric in perception. At the same time, it is characteristic of a particular emphasis of Eastern philosophy, where nature is seen from the overview, like a bird's eye-view.

For example, the prominent Korean artist Jeong Seon, (1676–1759) is credited as the father of true-view landscape painting and, therefore, with the "Koreanization" of Joseon Dynasty painting. His numerous illustrations of Mount Geumgang (located in today's North Korea) impress the viewer with the grand scale of nature portrayed in painted imagery. The most ground-breaking and significant development to occur in landscape painting of the eighteenth century is the so-called "true-view landscape painting" (jingyeong sansuhwa).[35]

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[34] Soyoung Lee, "Mountain and Water: Korean Landscape Painting," *The metropolitan museum of art*, accessed November 30, 2015, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/mowa/hd_mowa.htm.
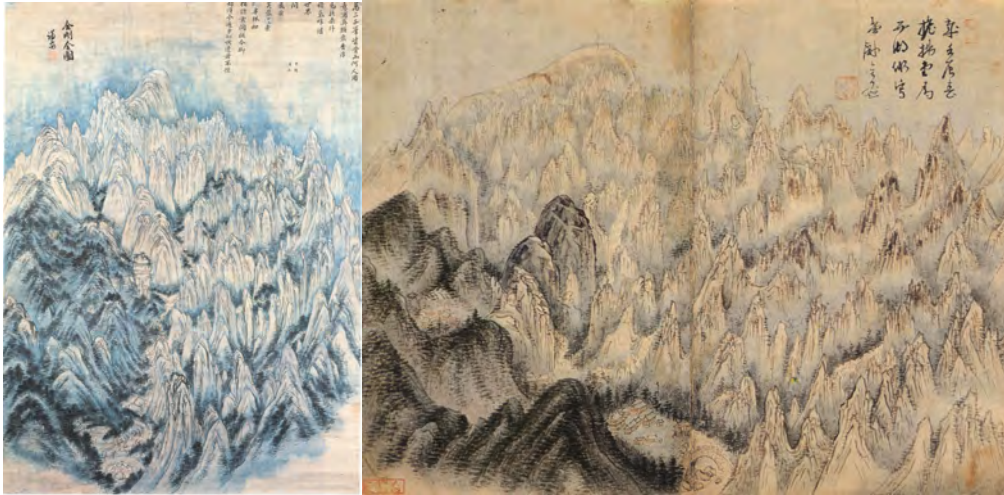[35] Ibid.

Figure 4. Jeong Seon, *Geumgangjeondo* ,1734, Korea.

The idea signifies this landscape painting that expresses both the actual topography and the layers of psychological meanings embedded in the scenery.

We can detect that they had a sense of awe towards nature. There is a clear sense of human being smallness in relationship to nature or, awe and wonder at nature.

According to the Dacher Keltner, social psychologist and Professor of psychology at University of California, awe is the ultimate "collective" emotion, for it motivates people to do things that enhance the greater good. Awe might help shift our focus from our narrow self-interest to the interests of the group to which we belong.[36]

In addition, according to a research conducted by social psychologists Paul Piff and Dacher Keltner, they researched about awe with human relationship. From the research, they found that awe helps connecting us to others, motivating us to behave in cooperative ways that leads solid relationships and harmonious communities. In one experiments, they evoked feelings of awe in the lab. They ask participants to recollect and write about a past experience of awe or watch a five-minute video of sublime scenes of nature. The participants experiencing awe cooperated, shared and sacrificed more for others. In comparison with other emotions like pride or amusement, awe evoked and encouraged participants to act collaborative.[37]

In conclusion, the sense of awe leads people to feel to connected each other, and even more, altruistic to others. Further more, the East Asian landscape painting describes not only an awe of nature but also a way of life inspired by the overview effect. In this regards, this is worth considering in more depth, because we need a of change attitude from self-centered

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[36] Paul Piff and Dacher Keltner, "Why do we experience awe," *The New York Times*, May 22, 2015, accessed November 27, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/opinion/sunday/why-do-we-experience-awe.html?_r=0.

[37] Ibid.

individualism, to connectedness in our currently problematic our society, as described in earlier chapters.

3.3.2. Overview effect

For further argument, I would like to suggest one more perspective, the 'Overview effect'. The Overview effect is an experience, which transforms an astronauts' perspective of the planet and mankind's place upon it. Author Frank White described it in 1987, and the way he explained it the overview effect is defined, among astronauts, as a sensation that astronauts experience when they look back at the Earth from space. Some astronauts report having an overwhelming feeling of the connectivity of space. And talk about having undergone a common experience of immense awe overwhelming feeling of love for the planet, as well as suddenly having been able to understand more profoundly the interconnection of all life on it. According to The Overview Institute, they contend: "There are no borders or boundaries on our planet except those that we create in our minds or through human behaviors. All the ideas and concepts that divide us when we are on the surface begin to fade from orbit and the moon. The result is a shift in worldview, and in identity."[38]

> I don't know how much those early views of the Earth from above influenced me, and pointed me to the Overview Effect, but I am sure they had an impact. It reminds me that, no matter what we accomplish in life, we do not achieve it alone. Each one of us is part of a greater whole system, extended in time and space. Perhaps our purpose is to contribute to the evolution and well-being of that system, but always to realize that we are not simply individual actors delivering a monologue. Rather, we are part of an ensemble, participating in an extraordinary cosmic play.[39]

Additionally, the short film 'Overview' is that explores this phenomenon through interviews with five astronauts who have experienced the Overview Effect. The film shows what they feel and what they have learned from their experience. Also it features insights from commentators and thinkers on the broader suggestions and significance of this understanding for our society, and our relationship to the environment – to nature, if you will.

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[38] Frank White, "The Overview effect: Astronauts' unique view of the earth and what we all can learn from it," *The overview institute,* December 7, 2012, accessed December 15, 2015, http://www.overviewinstitute.org/.
[39] Frank White, "Overview Effect," *The overview institute,* May 25, 2015, accessed November 30, 2015, http://www.overviewinstitute.org/.

Figure 5. Planetary Collective, *Overview,* 2012, New York.

The Overview effect forces us to understand our own existence as a part of the whole universe. When we think of life, normally, and at first, we tend to focus only on our own. The Overview effect enables us to see we share this planet, a limited space, and that we cannot but live together. Then, the question is: How are we to do it?

4. Methodology of Design thinking

4.1. Design thinking

My design project's aim is to encourage people to rethink solidarity and connectedness. I focused my research on social problems, especially the effect of individualism, and the resulting loss of human connectedness. My motivation is based on my personal background, which is founded in South-Korea's very competitive and individualistic society. For this reason, I have been naturally concerned with the social issues raised by the negative aspects

of individualism. Moreover, I have realized that it is not a concern only in Korea, for this sort of social problem has become a global issue for concern.

With all this in mind, I want to apply social design through art works, as a designer. The designer, artist and inventor Bruno Munari explained, "The designer is the artist of today, not because he is a genius but because he works in such a way as to re-establish contact between art and the public, because he has the humility and ability to respond to whatever demand is made of him by the society in which he lives, because he knows his job, and the ways and means of solving each problem of design."[40] Seen in light of this, designers can suggest and contribute to society directly by using their creativity. As mentioned above, social design can serve in a significant manner to accomplish this aim.

There are two main aspects to my design project; Connectedness, and Perception of landscape. In terms of method of expression, Connectedness is present as a core message of my project, and Perception of Landscape plays the part of metaphor, and as inspiration. Furthermore, my Design thinking process is based on IDEO's design thinking methods, and is, broadly speaking, divided into three steps; Inspiration, Ideation, Implementation. By applying this process, I involve people in my project, and entice them to invest emotionally. That is why I am now going to discuss a case study centered on public and participatory work, which combines methods of social design.

4.2. Case study

1. Before I Die, by Candy Chang.

"Before I die" is a participatory public art project by Candy Chang. She is an artist, designer, and urban planner. This art project gives people an opportunity to contemplate death, reflect on life, and share their personal aspirations in public space. She created the "Before I die" wall in 2011, in New Orleans, after losing someone she loved to hurricane Katrina. She started the project on an abandoned house to restore perspective and find consolation with her neighbors.

The abandoned house was covered with chalkboard paint and stenciled with the sentence "Before I die I want to_____." After completion of the wall, neighbors stopped and reflected on their lives with their answers. The wall became covered in chalk dreams and hopes.

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[40] Bruno Munari and Patrick Creagh, *Design as art* (London: Penguin, 2008), 32.

The work made people rethink their life, dreams, death, and credos. Since then, more than 1000 like walls have been created in 70 countries.[41] This project shows a way to engage people, and suggests how public space can encourage self-examination, and infuse empathy with others.

Figure 6. Candy Chang, *Before I Die*, 2011.

2. The List Wall Project, by Lisa Lala

"The List Wall Project" is a conceptual art installation by artist Lisa Lala. The project started from Kansas City, and it has been touring nationally since February of 2010. The project is intended to make people think about what is in their hearts, and on their minds in the now.
For example: What do we have in common? And: How are we different? With questions like these, the project encouraging people to commit to their aspirations by writing them down, the "List Wall Project" provides a place to contemplate what is next, e.g. with the question: "What is on your list?" [42] This project shows how to arouse a sense of solidarity by social design.

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[41] Candy Chang, "Before I Die," *Candy Chang.com,* 2011, accessed December 15, 2015,
http://candychang.com/before-i-die-in-nola/.
[42] Lisa Lala, "The List Wall Project," February, 2010, accessed December 15, 2015, http://www.lisalala.net/list-wall-project/.
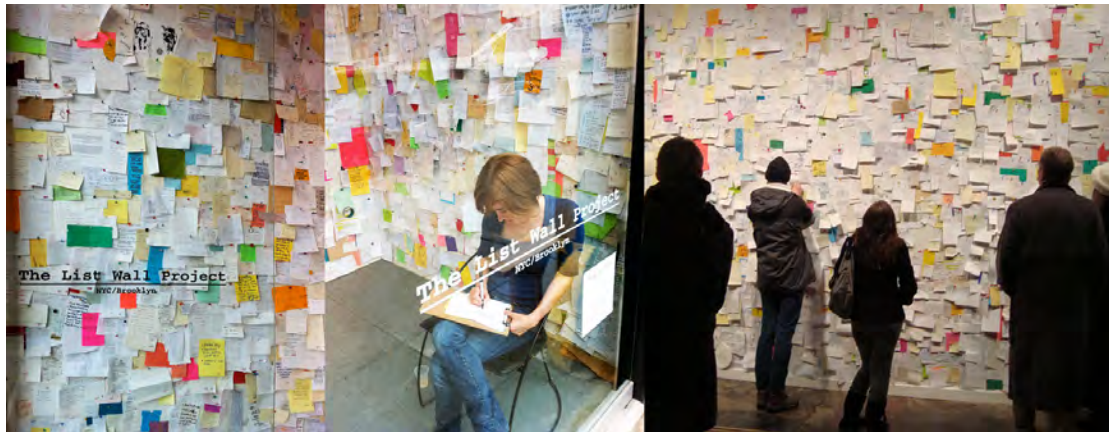
Figure 7. Lisa Lala, *The List Wall Project*, 2010, Kansas.

3. The Artist is present, by Marina Abramovic

Figure 8. Marina Abramovic, *The Artist is present*, 2010, New York.

Marina Abramović, performance artist, began using her own body as the subject, object, and medium of her work in the early 1970s. For the 2010 exhibition Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present, in The Museum of Modern Art's first performance retrospective, Abramović performed in the museum every day during the period of the exhibition. Visitors were encouraged to sit in silence across from the artist for a duration of their choosing, thus becoming participants in the artwork.[43] The project describes a human connection going beyond the traditional relationship between the artist and visitors to an exhibition. This performance inspired me to think about the ways of human connection. The simple act of looking at each other for a moment can be one of communication. Also, it arouses in people the feeling of connection without anyone having to saying anything. We pass by strangers every day, but we do not deeply think about our connection to them as a human being. It can

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[43] Marina Abramović, "The artist is present," *MoMA, Museum of Modern Art,* March 2010, accessed December 15, 2015, http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/marinaabramovic/.

even be is hard to notice a relationship in everyday life. So my question is, and my premise, if we recognize and rethink our lack of connectedness, can it lead to a reduction of social apathy and feelings social alienation?

5. Conclusion

Within a capitalistic society, competition and individualism are an inescapable result. Competition drives social growth, but the growth does not guarantee a society of quality. There are many social problems caused by competition and individualism:

The adverse effect of individualism has already become a social problem in recent years. Individuals and society are interrelated, and this interrelation causes social problems such as dying alone, lack of empathy, and social alienation, which stem from individual choice, or lack of understanding of alternatives. With this in mind, I focused on the human psychological aspects, and I would like as well to ask to people: What is the value of your own life? In our consumeristic and individualistic society, it seems evident that people are more and more concerned about 'what they have' instead of 'what they are'. Even worse, in my opinion and based on my findings, some people believe that money equals happiness. For this reason, people constantly chase money, and consequently and have lost the meaning and value of human connectedness. From this point, I applied two kinds of theories as an alternative to these social problems: First, the 'Being' mode as defined by Erich Fromm. And second, the 'Perception of Landscape' as explained by the Overview effect.

Erich Fromm suggested that the 'Being' mode is more important than the 'Having' mode for human life. He emphasized that individual egotism, greed, and selfishness make people no longer able to feel in a harmonious and peaceful state. On the contrary, sharing and making relationships – connecting – with others is more important in human society, and in addition the latter kinds of behavior can lead to true human happiness.

In addition, the View of nature perception of landscape can be one a good way to evoke a view of life in terms of connectedness. Seeing landscape in terms of the View of nature art philosophy gives us a chance to rethink human connections and relationships. In a broader sense, these theories and terms present us with the conclusion that, human belong to nature and in it, we live together and coexist with the planet as a whole.

I think we have to shed new light on the meaning of connectedness in this day and age.

Therefore, as a designer, the aim of my design project is to arouse in people feeling and experience of connectedness. Through the application of social design methods and process, my design project plays a meaningful role in the current form of individualistic society, and is a way to make a change, even if it is a accomplished with small actions, and person at a time.

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